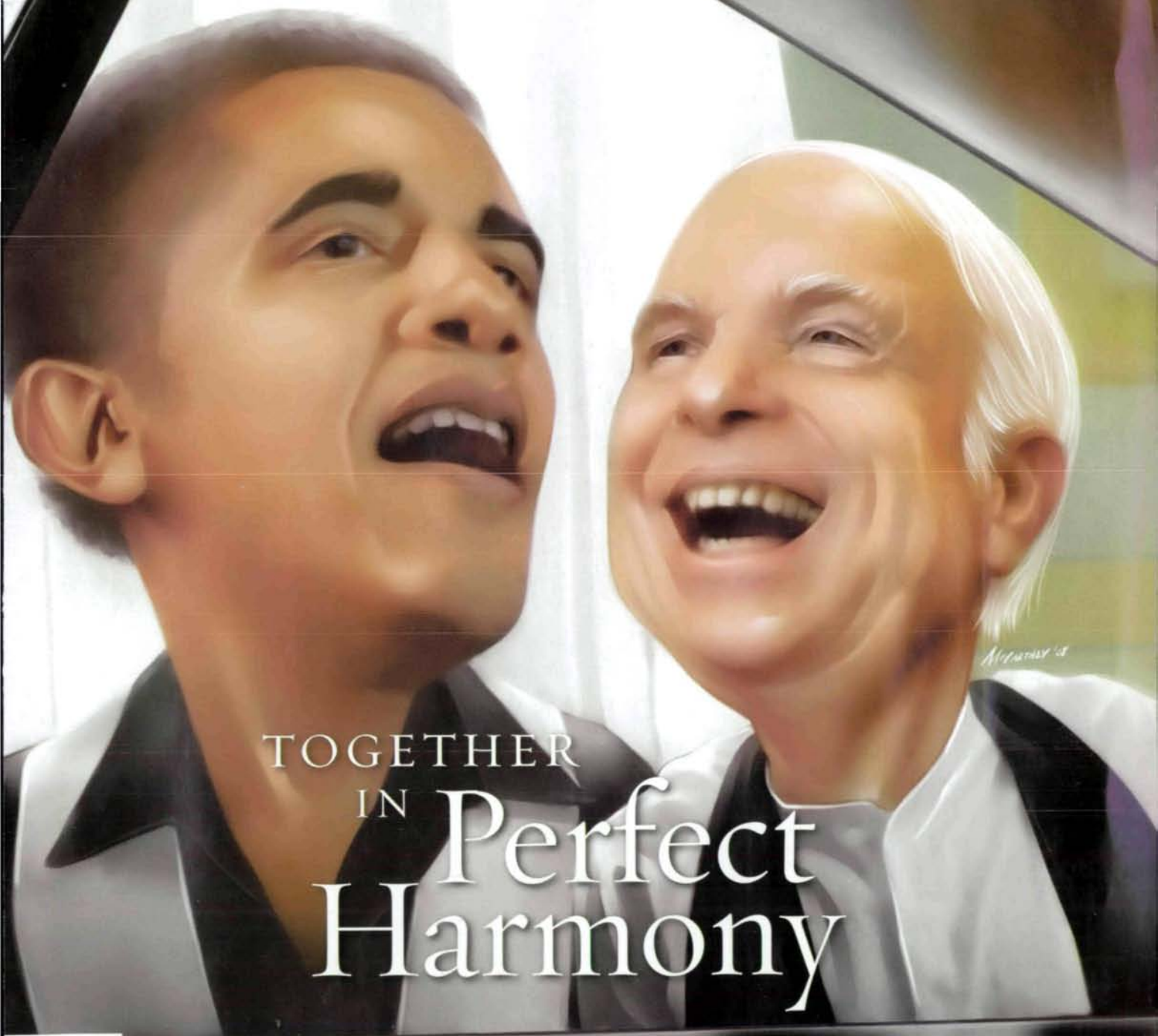


Chronicles

November 2008

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

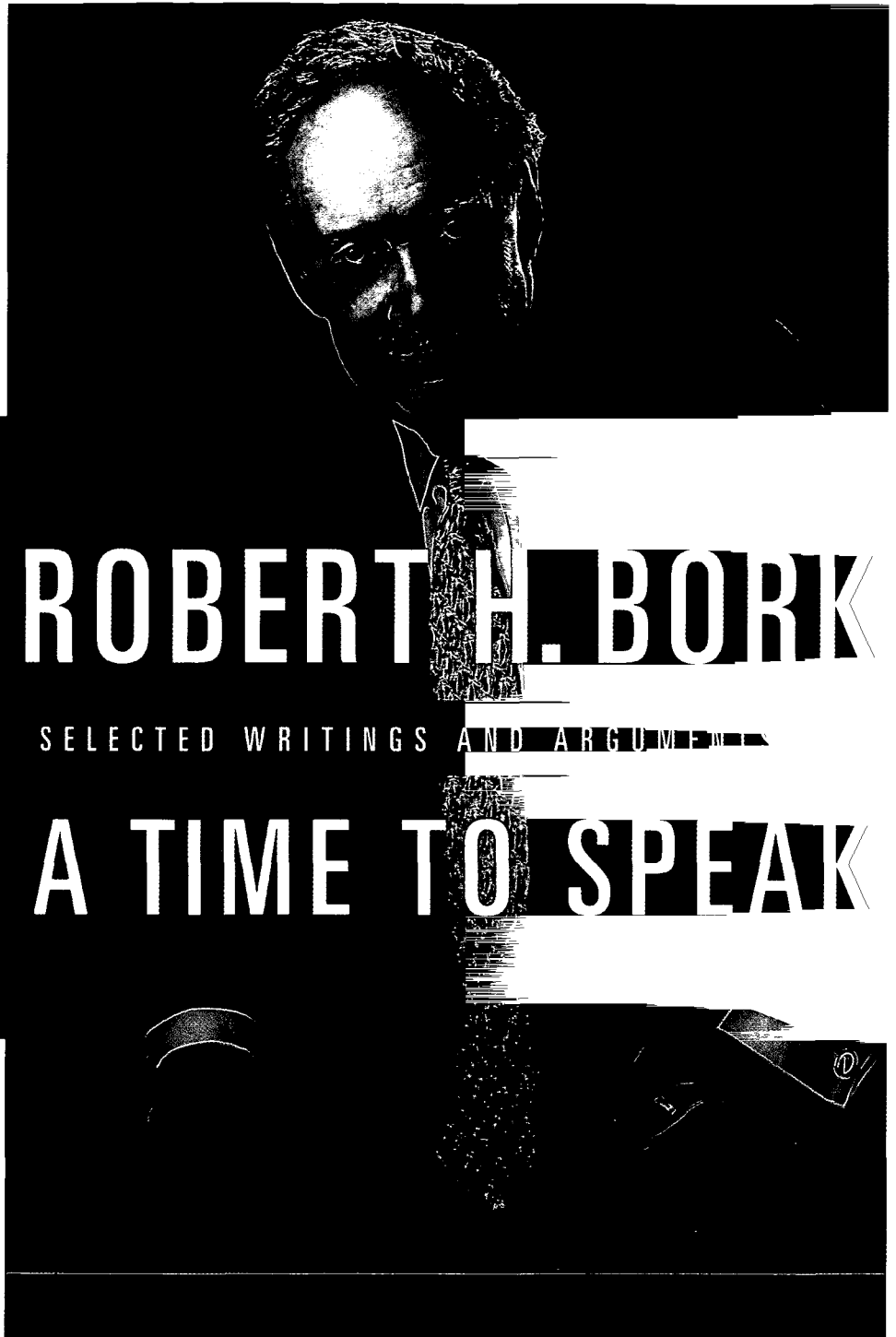
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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On *Chronicles* History

I greatly appreciated Dr. Clyde Wilson's fine article in the September issue ("Beginning With History," *Views*) and located all of the works cited on the War Between the States. They should be arriving at my politically incorrect home (I have a full-service shooting range out back and harvest deer and turkey on my property regularly) shortly. Mine is probably the only home in the state of Michigan that flies a 10th Tennessee regimental flag out front (though it is a reproduction and probably Chinese-made). I love my country and am disappointed with its educational decline even in my lifetime. Keep up the good work!

—Dr. James S. Bradford
Kalamazoo, MI

The *Views* on history by Clyde Wilson, Donald Livingston, and Roger McGrath made the September issue one of the best I have received. This sort of analysis of history, along with top recommendations in books, is very helpful in my own reading and in the library I am building for my children. I would welcome more of such essays dealing with various areas of history.

—Ray Van Neste
Jackson, TN

On Naming Names

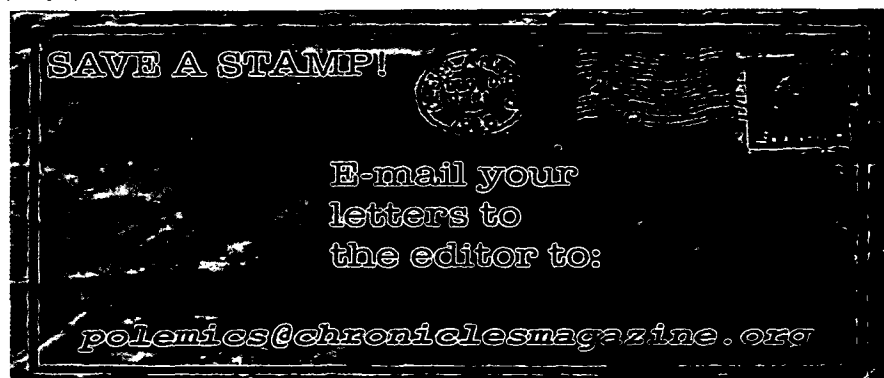
As always, Joseph Sobran sees the small details that reveal the larger reality ("Words and Power," *The Bare*

Bodkin, September). I, too, had noticed that Americans were no longer naming their sons and daughters after saints but seemed to be choosing names in the manner of an upscale restaurant or a clothing retailer, searching for evocative names for red, blue, yellow, green, and brown. "Loden, have you met our Taupe?"

The case of "Kate" is amusing. Somehow it became the archetypal feminist name. Cartoonist R. Crumb named the head of an imaginary band of feminist commandos "Big Kate." When Katie Couric first came to NBC she was Kathy Couric—cute and wholesome and therefore politically incorrect. Next she was "Katherine Couric"—dignified but old. Then she was "Kate Couric." This no doubt pleased the feminists but perhaps made Joe Sixpack uneasy. Finally the dialectic yielded up its synthesis in the form of "Katie Couric," which has so far encountered no antithesis. ("Kat Couric," anyone?)

Sobran points out that Jews haven't succumbed as much to this trend and still give their children biblical names. I think the reason is that Jewish parents are still proud of being Jews, even if the theological beliefs have dropped away, while Christian parents, perhaps unconsciously, want to distance themselves from the embarrassing fact that they are Christians, or that their parents were. Perhaps a revival of Christian naming would help to make Christian belief seem respectable again.

—Peter Henderson
Charlottesville, VA



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The Guest Who Stayed Forever

I wish I had a dollar—oops, better make that a euro—for every recent obituary marking the political death of neoconservatism. I would have been able to bail out the grand financial house of Lehman Brothers and avert the tragedy of one more Wall Street fat cat being forced to lay off another maid in his mansion in the Hamptons.

Many of my colleagues in the Reality-Based Community have displayed a lot of wishful thinking in declaring that the “age of neoconservatism is over” or that “we are entering the post-neoconservative age.” You’ve probably read at least one of these commentaries overflowing with *schadenfreude* that, depending on the author and his or her ideological biases, predicts that this or that neocon—or all the neocons, for that matter—will be out of a job if Barack Obama ends up residing at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, or that the selection of Gov. Sarah Palin, as opposed to Sen. Joseph Lieberman, is an indication that the neocons have been losing their hold on the Republican Party. Sure. And Obama has been reading Murray Rothbard, and McCain has a subscription to *Chronicles*.

It’s true that the majority of Americans seem to agree that, Surge or no Surge, the ambitious project to implant democracy in Mesopotamia and the broader Middle East known as the Iraq war—the proud child of the neoconservative “brain”—has proved to be one of the greatest strategic disasters in U.S. history and a source of humiliation for the neoconservative parents. But the parents have not disowned their child and are blaming the doctors, the nanny, the kindergarten for the fact that their son—a Free and Democratic Iraq—turned out to be a psycho. The neocon intellectual genes were good; it’s the environment that turned him into a juvenile delinquent. Deep in-

side him there is good, real good. The coming “liberation” of Iran will prove it.

And whether it would be a McCain administration or one led by Obama, you can bet your \$700-billion rescue plan that either old-school neocons, such as the American Enterprise Institute’s Robert Kagan, or those masquerading as “liberal internationalists,” such as the Brookings Institution’s Kenneth Pollack, will be leading not only the coming confrontation with Iran (and with Pakistan and with Russia and with China) but the continuing U.S.-led March of Freedom in our Broader Galaxy.

Like the guest who came for dinner and stayed forever, the neocons will be around for a very long time, certainly as long as the ruling political elites in Washington continue to promote a geo-strategic and geo-economic agenda based on the axiom that the United States has an obligation to impose her military and economic power worldwide. Our leaders need an intellectual caste whose members help legitimize the political elite’s power at home and abroad, in the same way that the priests would divine the power of kings in the past.

The neoconservatives, through their media outlets, think tanks, and foundations, have produced a secular religion of sorts for the American Empire. They help our modern kings in creating images, manipulating symbols, and promoting historical analogies as part of an effort to convince the American people to provide their rulers with the resources to invade other countries and spread American values and markets throughout the universe. Big Business, which benefits from its political and economic status in the empire, is more than willing to use its financial resources to subsidize this intellectual caste, while the government rushes to appoint its members

to powerful policy positions. And those intellectuals who dare to challenge the new universal religion and its promoters are accused of heresy (“isolationism”). After all, “We’re all Georgians today.”

And *apropos* Georgia, now that neoconservatism has become the dominant ideology in Washington, Republicans and Democrats, McCain and Obama, relying on their court intellectuals, accept it as a given that America has the moral obligation to protect “democratic” Georgia from “authoritarian” Russia. The only difference between the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates is that McCain is willing to go to war against Russia ASAP, while Obama is ready to give diplomacy a chance, although Obama is more ready than McCain to apply the tenets of neoconservatism to the backwaters of the globe—say, sub-Saharan Africa. In short, neoconservatism may have several faces, but its ideological heart beats to one imperial tune.

Like a vassal in the feudal system, the average American had taken it for granted that, based on the hegemonic ideology, he was obliged to “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty,” without asking what his country can do for him, but what he can do for his country. It’s not inconceivable that the costs in lives and money involved in maintaining and expanding the American Empire will someday become so high that the average American citizen might try to remove the real chains that bind him to Washington and, by extension, to dump the neoconservative ideology into the dustbin of history, demanding that the unwelcome guest take a hike. But that is not going to happen under Obama or McCain.



BAILOUT MANIA

We might live in the postindustrial era, but economic booms and busts have not disappeared. Unfortunately, these days the taxpayers seem to get stuck with the losses.

The current crisis results from expanded mortgage lending, much of it financed by subprime loans secured through "collateralized debt obligations" (CDOs) by private investors and the government-sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The federal government spurred lending at every turn: Banks had been targeted for "red-lining" — not lending in poor neighborhoods. Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac subsidized ever more mortgage lending. The Federal Reserve's expansive monetary policy artificially inflated property and commodity values.

Rising housing prices caused borrowers, lenders, and investors to treat subprime loans as a no-lose proposition. Even if a borrower got into trouble, the home could be sold for a profit, making everyone whole.

Eventually, the housing market slowed, causing the entire "don't worry, be happy" mortgage-based system to collapse. Prices fell, foreclosures rose, mortgage repayments dropped, and the value of mortgage-backed securities collapsed. This set off an ever-worsening financial cycle, taking down homeowners, brokers, mortgage firms, commercial banks, and investment banks.

To date, total subprime losses and write-downs are about \$500 billion. We may have another \$500 billion worth to go.

Government policies accelerated the downward spiral. Fair Value Accounting and "mark to market" rules, endorsed by government regulatory agencies, force asset write-downs based on current sales. In unsettled markets where values are uncertain, the rule poisons corporate balance sheets by treating long-term, cash-producing assets as essentially valueless.

At the same time, the prospect of a government bailout discouraged private action. Why act when the government might cover the loss? Moreover, the Bear Stearns, Fannie/Freddie, and AIG bailouts sacrificed shareholders to bondholders. That made it harder for firms such as Lehman to raise additional capital, since potential investors feared they would be the first ones tossed overboard if the enterprise failed.

So far Washington has provided \$300 billion to refinance failed mortgages, \$200 billion in bank loans through the Federal Reserve's Term Auction Facility, \$200 billion to purchase Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac stock, \$87 billion in loans for JPMorgan Chase to finance Lehman trades, \$85 billion for AIG, and \$29 billion to finance JPMorgan Chase's purchase of Bear Stearns.

There is more: Federal Reserve cash infusions to the financial markets; Treasury Department plans to purchase mortgage-backed securities directly; Treasury setting aside \$50 billion to guarantee money-market funds. The government's takeover of Fannie/Freddie put the taxpayers on the hook for a multitude of bad mortgages.

In mid-September the Bush administration proposed the mother of all bailouts: buying up \$700 billion in bad mortgages and other assets. The presidential candidates and congressional leaders all voiced their general assent. Their only disagreement was whether everyone else, such as Main Street and "working families," should be bailed out too.

There is an argument for the Federal Reserve to help maintain liquidity for creditworthy financial institutions facing a temporary cash crunch. But the presumption should be against bailouts. Where the entities are quasigovernmental, such as Fannie/Freddie, the government may have fewer choices. Even then, however, any support should be combined with full privatization, with no more

political interference, lower-interest loans, or implicit guarantees.

Ultimately, the bad mortgage assets that underlay the financial crisis must be liquidated. But government purchases merely shift the pain from foolish businesses and individuals to innocent taxpayers. The Paulson plan would enshrine loss-free capitalism, creating incentives for even worse corporate misbehavior and larger bailouts in the future.

Better, not more, regulation is necessary. The financial markets already answer to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Securities and Exchange Commission, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Federal Reserve, state authorities, and international standards. The deregulation of the 1990's helped spur a lengthy period of strong economic growth. In contrast, no institutions were managed more directly by government than Fannie/Freddie, with disastrous results.

Streamlining rules and agencies and emphasizing transparency makes sense. The lack of transparency, and failure to understand how highly leveraged market participants had become through subprime CDOs, was a major cause of our present difficulties. Unfortunately, we can't trust those who have presided over the current mess — and who have given us a \$9.5 trillion national debt and \$100 trillion in unfunded liabilities for Social Security and Medicare — to fix the financial system.

The best antidote to the financial crisis is a stronger, growing economy. That requires growth-oriented policies and federal fiscal responsibility. Imposing counterproductive regulation and enacting wasteful bailouts would undermine the overall economy.

Financial adjustment is inevitable. Government cannot save us from paying the cost of past mistakes. The long-term solution requires America to start living within her means.

—Doug Bandow

CATHOLICS AND PALIN

John McCain's selection of Sarah Palin as his running mate was surprising, but the surprise pales in comparison to the reaction of conservative Christians, especially Catholics. In their sudden race to endorse McCain-Palin, they have cast aside any questions about the complementarity of the sexes, or even the late John Paul II's "theology of the body."

Catholic laymen who have always voted Republican but were unhappy with McCain were, not surprisingly, the first to crumble at the sight of the moose-hunting, pistol-packing, pro-life mother of five, but I have also heard orthodox priests say that they wish Mrs. Palin were at the top of the ticket. And one well-known traditionalist Catholic is even implying that it might be sinful to vote for a third-party candidate instead of for McCain. (In fairness, he sees the pick of Palin as one of several signs that the Republican Party is avowedly pro-life with no exceptions in this election cycle.)

The negative reactions have been few and far between. One Catholic mother of seven, upon hearing the news, wondered why the mother of a four-month-old child (let alone a child with Down syndrome) would want to run for vice president. Of course, that same child was born prematurely after Palin, leaking amniotic fluid, refused to cancel her keynote speech at a Republican Governors Association conference. The Palins chose not to abort baby Trig (not a minor matter, when upward of 90 percent of Down's babies are murdered in their mothers' wombs today), but they were willing to take a calculated risk with his life in order to advance Sarah's political career.

The revelation of the pregnancy of Palin's 17-year-old daughter has been jumped on by the left with glee, but Catholics can certainly understand that sin happens. Far more disturbing is the fact that Mrs. Palin knew that accepting the nomination meant exposing her daughter to international scrutiny and ridicule—yet she did it anyway. Unlike her daughter's

premarital sex, that was not a decision made in the heat of passion. As she told ABC's Charlie Gibson, when John McCain asked her to be his running mate, "I didn't blink."

This is just sexism, some Catholic women (and not a few men) have responded. Would I be raising the same issues if Mrs. Palin were a man? Well, if we were discussing Todd rather than Sarah, the question of throwing the 17-year-old daughter under the bus would remain. But most of the other questions wouldn't come up, not because I would go easier on a man, but because they wouldn't exist.

That doesn't mean, however, that it is sexist to raise them. Instead, it points to the very heart of the problem: From a Catholic understanding of the complementarity of the sexes, should a woman ever find herself in the position where she has to choose between her vocation as a wife and mother and political service? Even considering this a choice that needs to be made implies that, at best, motherhood and political service are of equal value.

But they aren't—not in the eyes of the Church. That is not to demean wives and mothers, but to raise their vocation to its proper dignity—a dignity that dwarfs any that may once have been attached to politics.

It's hard not to like Sarah Palin. There is no doubt that, compared with Barack Obama, Joe Biden, and John McCain, she seems more normal—more one of us. Her failings as much as her virtues bolster that feeling.

But that doesn't change the decision before us in November. Anyone who votes for John McCain because of Sarah Palin still votes for John McCain and all of his baggage: rabid support for a war that two consecutive popes have condemned; the possible expansion of that war to Iran; a new cold war with Russia (or even, God forbid, a "hot" one); expanded funding of embryonic stem-cell research (ESCR), including the creation of new lines, which requires the destruction of more embryos (while stressing adult stem-cell research at the moment, McCain has never stated that

he was wrong to vote for ESCR); an unwillingness (as McCain repeatedly stated back in 1999) to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (a position that Cindy McCain indicated, in a September interview with Katie Couric, her husband still holds today, despite campaign promises to the contrary); support for contraception, sex education, and family-planning programs.

Anyone who planned to abstain from voting in November or intended to vote for a third-party candidate and is now considering voting for McCain-Palin needs to ask himself this question: Why? Is Sarah Palin providing cover for his desire to vote for McCain? Or is her nomination simply a convenient excuse to allow him to vote against Barack Obama?

If the latter, it would be better to own up to the reason and state forthrightly that he is not voting for McCain-Palin but against Obama-Biden. Then his vote for the Republican ticket at least would not imply support for all of the anti-Christian policies that McCain has proposed, and the voter will not feel compelled to defend McCain when he carries through on his promises.

For me, nothing has changed. Neither ticket will receive my vote. Instead, I will offer a prayer on Election Day that Mrs. Palin's presence on the ballot does not signal the final triumph of feminism over the traditional Christian understanding of the proper relationship between the sexes.

—Scott P. Richert

ELECTIVE ABORTION

Flip-flopper. Like *racist* or *isolationist*, it's not a word that you'd like to have attached to your name. In recent years, it has been used to whap the likes of John Kerry and Mitt Romney over the head. It means that your finger is in the wind, that you are not a Decider, that, like most politicians, you're full of shift.

Now comes the godless leftist media once again to pound "psychologist and author" Dr. James Dobson with flip-floppery, since he predictably

ate his own words, as told to the *New York Times* last year: "If neither of the two major political parties nominates an individual who pledges himself or herself to the sanctity of human life, [I] will join others in voting for a minor party candidate."

That was then, when Rudy Giuliani or—gasp!—John McCain threatened to capture the GOP nomination. Now—well, now we have Sarah Palin, who neither flip-flops nor blinks. And technically, she was in fact nominated by a major political party.

Sarah Palin, we are told, is a sign, a *winkie-winkie* to the pro-life community that the long-awaited *Roe*-reversal is in the cards. Just one more election; just one more justice. "Change is coming!"

Senator McCain, as he proclaimed at Saddleback, to a stirring round of applause, believes that life begins at conception. (Obama, pay grade notwithstanding, seems to think otherwise; or perhaps it is merely his "faith" that teaches him about the origin of life, and God forbid that something so personal as faith should ever pole-vault over the Wall of Separation.) Is abortion murder, or infanticide? Well, you bet, says John McCain, since life begins at conception. So here is this human life, made in the image of God, the product of dinner-and-a-movie, when "no" didn't mean "no" (read: rape). Kill it, says John McCain. It's a human life, but it's small, it's out of sight—and hasn't this young woman been through enough?

John McCain has flip-flopped on *Roe v. Wade*. Whether purely out of political expedience or not, we cannot say. But we can say that it has been politically beneficial to him. He's no longer talking about "family conferences" and never, ever wanting to overturn *Roe*, although a woman named Cindy McCain, who claims to know what he really thinks, said otherwise. "We contacted the McCain campaign to clarify Cindy McCain's position on abortion," reports Katie Couric. "They told us that, like Laura Bush, Mrs. McCain does not favor overturning *Roe v. Wade*, which guarantees the legal right to an abortion." Perhaps her

husband hasn't flip-flopped after all.

These days, "life begins at conception" and "culture of life" flow easily from the McCain campaign, but when pressed, the candidate has only said that he would like to see the culture of life grow to the point where *Roe* would become irrelevant. As long as he wants to make exceptions for "rape and incest," however, *Roe* will remain very relevant. Sarah Palin, on the other hand—and commendably—would not allow abortion at all; they have agreed to disagree.

John McCain, like Hillary, Pelosi, Barack, and Michael J. Fox, has thought long and hard about embryonic stem-cell research and has come to a very special, personal, and painful decision. Unlike the rest of the aforementioned cavalcade of stars, he promotes a culture of life and knows when life begins. Kill 'em anyway. People have diseases. Make a pill; down the hatch. Sarah Palin, once again, agrees to disagree.

Wait, we are reminded by both the NRLC and NARAL, Sarah Palin is a symbol, a window into the true soul of John McCain. And through that window, we can see just the sort of justices that a McCain administration would nominate. As first lady, Cindy McCain would not nominate Supreme Court justices; then again, neither would Sarah Palin, as vice president. And as for windows, no one seems to disagree that, at least for a very long while, Joe Lieberman (one of McCain's many "safe, legal, and rare" buddies) was his choice for running mate. That choice would not have energized a significant segment of voters. Palin has.

If the primary source of "energize-

ment" for the McCain ticket is Sarah Palin's views on abortion and ESCR, another letdown awaits the "culture of life." Sadly, James Dobson knew that a McCain administration would mean this, but, like a growing host of "excited" antiabortionists, he flip-flopped and fell for *winkie-winkie*.

—Aaron D. Wolf

OBITER DICTA

Rockford Institute Vice President **Christopher Check** will speak on "Henry VIII's Divorce" at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, October 26, at Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Norwalk, Connecticut. Saint Mary's is located at 699 West Avenue. For more information, call (203) 866-5546.

Our poet this month is **Timothy Murphy**. His collections of poetry include *The Deed of Gift* (Story Line Press) and *Very Far North* (Between the Lines). Over 30 of his poems have been published in the pages of *Chronicles*.

Our cover art is provided by our interior artist, **George McCartney, Jr.** Mr. McCartney studied at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and received a bachelor's of art from the State University of New York at Geneseo. Since 1997, he has worked in various media in the fields of illustration, graphic design, and textiles. George currently resides in North Carolina with his wife, Kristin, and their children.

Our interior art is provided by **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson, our designer, received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.



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Whither the Republic?

This month, we shall have an answer to an all-important question: Which arm of our bipartisan party state will occupy the White House for the next four years? This is an issue second in importance only to such urgent American questions as "When will Britney Spears be allowed to see her kids?" "How much weight will Jennifer Lopez drop after giving birth to twins?" And—for those of us with an interest in ancient history—"Who shot J.R.?" I know these are the most important issues because they have been featured on the cover of America's most honest newspaper, the *National Enquirer*.

I suppose we should also add to the list, "What absurd name will Bristol Palin give the love child whose conception is nobody else's business?" Both camps have their own reasons for the *cordon sanitaire* that has been placed, quite properly, around Mrs. Palin's children. Since neither party has the slightest interest in decency or good manners, what they are really saying is that the way in which politicians conduct themselves or manage their family responsibilities is of no interest to the electorate. I wish someone had told the Republicans this when they were going after Bill Clinton. In some states, Bristol could marry a Suzie instead of a Levi, and, before this generation passes away, she will be able to marry both Levi and Suzie and perhaps the family's entire team of sled dogs, because marriage has been made the mere creature of the state, which can choose to define it in any way that pleases the current consensus of college professors, media moguls, and judges we call "public opinion."

How should family issues such as same-sex "marriage" be addressed? I mean politically, because there can be no such thing as same-sex marriage. It is a mere figment of the imagination like the unicorn, but worse: It is a self-contradictory figment, something like a unicorn with two horns. As a colleague once sagely observed to me, erotic relations between two men or two women are not sexual, since the very word *sex* requires male and female.

Then what to do politically? It depends, I suppose, on our political orientation. We do have two parties in the United States, and their names at least should point to the existence of two ideologies, one called "democratic" and the other known as "republican." In theory, the advocates of "democracy" champion the rights of the people to rule themselves, according to the principle of majority rule, without any impediment in the form of aristocracy, religion, tradition, family ties, or moral principles.

In a democracy, then, a poor majority can confiscate the wealth of a minority—as is done in every socialist state in

the world including the United Socialist State of America. Some democracies have gone further—for example, in insisting that children be reared and educated according to the ruling majority's ideology. Minority children—such as the children of fundamentalist Mormons or those of suspects in the French Revolution—might conceivably be taken from their parents because their religion or ideology is offensive to the majority who putatively support the regime. In the most extreme case, governments purportedly representing majorities have attempted to outlaw Catholic schools and subject homeschooling parents to rules that would force them to comply with the same regulations as public schools. So in a perfect democracy the status of same-sex "marriage" will be determined by majority rule.

Republican governments, though they may call themselves "popular" and rest on broad-based support, impose severe restrictions on the principle of majority rule. By definition, almost, republics are not supposed to be monarchies, but this is a question of words rather than facts. The English monarchy of 1800 was closer to republican principles than was the Venetian Republic of the same era. A better way to look at this distinction is through the eyes of Aristotle, who said that a *politeia* or commonwealth is governed by law and tradition, not by the arbitrary rule of a sovereign, and it makes no difference whether the sovereign is one man, a hundred men, or a democratic majority. This Greek word *politeia* was typically translated into Latin as *res publica*, which means the people's business, the origin of our word *republic*. In this sense, a republic is not defined by the formal absence of a king but by its institution, which makes it, in Burke's famous phrase, a "government of laws and not of men."

Republics come in many shapes and sizes, but they share some features. In a republic, legislation cannot, on the arbitrary whim of the sovereign, override custom, tradition, and legal precedent. Thus, such Supreme Court decisions as *Roe v. Wade* and *Brown v. Board of Education* would be unthinkable in a republic. Republicans also agree that civil rights and privileges can and should be restricted to the more responsible classes of the nation—for example, taxpayers, property owners, and native-born citizens. Finally, republican governments do not rule directly over the citizens but rest upon a broad and deep substructure of lower



political jurisdictions and social institutions. This is a very important point, and one that is frequently overlooked by political theorists except as regards the question of scale discussed by Donald Livingston.

When we think of republics, we often turn to fifth-century Athens, Rome before the Punic Wars, 14th-century Florence, and the United States in 1800. In fifth-century Athens, there was very little that could be described as a state, not even police. There was a council to propose legislation and a citizen-assembly to ratify proposals and make decisions on war and peace, but most of the public business of everyday life was conducted by *demes* or neighborhood governments, extended kin groups, religious associations, and families. The Roman Republic, similarly, was constituted by kindreds and tribes. When the senate ordered the execution of citizens who had participated in an illicit Bacchanalia, they left it up to the heads of the families to carry out the sentence.

In Florence before the Medici established their dictatorship, the government rested on the craft and trade guilds but also took for granted an extensive structure of dioceses and parishes, religious societies, and extended lineages. Individuals counted for nothing, and if one was unlucky enough to be born into a family officially stigmatized as “magnates,” he might find himself liable for an offense committed by his second cousin and forced into exile.

Finally, in the good old U.S.A., the national government was inferior in most respects to the governments of the 13 sovereign states, but even those states—as Tocqueville observed—had little power to interfere in the common life of townships, parishes, and counties. In each instance, the lower levels of society, whether official—states or provinces, guilds, Athenian *demes*—or unofficial (as in kin groups and parishes) were able to exercise their functions with a minimum of interference from the “national” government. Since marriage, family, and kinship are prior to the state, which draws its legitimacy from these connections of blood and sex, a true republic would be loath to interfere in marriage and, at the very least, could never redefine this basic institution of our common life, either by permitting no-fault divorce or by creating the fiction of civil unions between homosexuals, which is merely marriage by another name.

The distinction between a democratic state, which rests on the absolute principle of majority rule of individual citizens, and a republic, which must govern itself not only according to law and tradition but with respect for the rights and duties of lower-level institutions, is no mere technicality. But even when these terms had substance, they were far from being mutually exclusive. Radical democrats have accepted some restrictions on civil rights—age limits for voting and office-holding and even a denial of these rights to felons—while republicans, in seeking votes, are inevitably led to court the masses by offering them more privileges. This need to pander to the mob partly explains why English Tories and American Republicans have often taken the lead in radical legislation empowering the lower or-

ders. So it is important to distinguish the republican and democratic elements in a constitutional structure.

A key distinction between republicans, on the one hand, and democrats and socialists, on the other, would be the different ways in which they interpret equality. Going back to Aristotle and the Florentine republicans, to the Old Whigs and early American republicans of both the Federalist and Jeffersonian parties, we could say that, while democrats believe in equal rights for all, republicans believe in equal rights for equal people—that civil rights are proportional to the contribution made by this or that group of citizens. It is not just or fair, we would say, that an uneducated welfare dependent who shirks his patriotic duties should hold the same political power as a middle-class farmer or store owner who pays his taxes, does military service, and spends some of his free time working for the common good. For the democrat, civil rights are abstract and universal, while republicans will think more in concrete and historical terms.

Traditional republicans would also not think it right to guarantee the same rights to women as to men, wives as to husbands, children as to parents, not simply because nature has designed men and women for separate purposes or because children are too young to make their own decisions, but, more fundamentally, because to guarantee equal rights for married women is to extend the power of the state into the family.

Democrats, self-described civil libertarians, and other leftists will, for example, often cite the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights as authority for their view that the American political system rests upon a foundation of universal human rights that belong to individuals and are protected by the state. On this understanding, marriage can be nothing more than a private contract to be enforced by the state, and even though some democrats may object to “gay marriage” or no-fault divorce, they must concede in principle that these monstrosities can be permitted so long as it is the will of the democratic majority.

This brings us back to the question of the two-horned unicorn. “Family values” conservatives in the evangelical wing of the GOP like to say that something must be done to protect the family, whose desperate condition is signaled by high rates of divorce and illegitimacy (to say nothing of the host of related problems of working mothers, daycare, declining birthrates, abortion, school shootings, and same-sex “marriage”). The family is in crisis, they cry, poisoned by moral permissiveness and undermined by an antifamily tax-code that penalizes marriage and children. The tax code must be altered to reward (rather than penalize) large families, and governments must use their resources to encourage women to marry, bear many children, all of them breastfed, and to stay at home to take care of them.

To anyone but an ardent social revolutionary, the conservatives’ complaints seem all too justified; however, their call for government support of the institution reveals a basic misunderstanding of the relationship between families and the state, and their solutions will result only in the fur-

ther subjugation of the family to the malevolent power of social bureaucracy.

In the tradition of Aristotle and Saint Thomas, the family was viewed as a natural (and, for Christians, a divinely ordained) institution. Neoconservatives and their social-conservative followers, in calling for government actions to reinvigorate fatherhood and motherhood and to define marriage, are simply repeating the arguments of Marx and Engels and turning them on their head. If the family is a fragile historical construction tied to property and patriarchy, then parents should not be trusted, and families would have to be propped up artificially by government agencies—the very agencies that (according to conservatives) have been undermining the family for a hundred years.

Even if the Marxist/capitalist myth of family history were true, it would provide a dangerous incentive to erect a labyrinthine bureaucracy out of the ruins of the family authority usurped by socialist governments. But it is not even partly correct. It is simply wrong. There is, in fact, a wealth of solid information, from historians and anthropologists, on Western and non-Western cultures, and despite the creative richness and ingenuity men and women have displayed in devising exotic forms of marriage and family, they converge, statistically, upon a human norm of a monogamous pair of a faithful wife and a not always perfectly faithful husband mated more or less for life and dedicated to the happiness and well-being of their children over whom they exercise something like sovereign authority.

It is from the family and from networks of extended kin-folks that larger social and political structures have been developed, up to and including the nation-state and the world state that is being constructed in our lifetime. The family created civilization and the state, not *vice versa*.

Civilization and political systems are fragile, but marriage and family are natural institutions, and although they can be corrupted, distorted, and damaged by human arrogance and folly, the results will always be the same: social collapse followed by a renewal of all the ancient and beautiful things without which human life is impossible. If we could ever succeed in lifting the dead hand of government from our everyday lives—cutting taxes and rolling back virtually all the social legislation of the past 100 years—we should not have to worry too much about the state of the family. American families would take care of themselves, as they have always done. The inevitability of the family derives from the natural needs and desires it serves, not only the natural love of men and women for each other and their children but their equally natural hatred for those who harm or threaten to harm members of the family or the family itself.

One obvious answer to the questions raised by same-sex “marriage” and no-fault divorce is that it should not be the state’s business to define or even regulate marriage. Marriage, as a good republican should understand, is not a private contract between individuals or a matter for legislation: Marriage unites families, not individuals, and if the

families belong to a religion, their marriage customs will be regulated by their church.

The one helpful thing that a government can do is not to interfere in the right of private contract that would allow a Christian couple to draw up a marriage covenant, restricting the justification for divorce to specific offenses, stipulating custody, and regulating inheritance. If two businessmen can form a partnership, why have so many state legislators tried to prevent husbands and wives from doing the same thing?

Every four years Americans are besieged by politicians seeking their votes and their money. Neither major party, however, has the slightest interest in restoring a single feature of republican government. However we choose to waste our vote in November, there is one true republican answer we can give them, and it is one that is entirely consistent with the decentralized federal system drawn up in Philadelphia over two centuries ago. When politicians come asking for your vote, making promises to rescue Fannie and Freddie, stimulate free enterprise, and save the family, tell them what a great American statesman said in 1861: “All we ask is to be let alone.”

Ecce Canis
by Timothy Murphy

From the first slough some forty birds flushed wild.
Maddened by pheasant scent,
Bold Fenian was with child
while I triangulated where they went.

North to the mallards’ frozen mating hole,
a second cattail slough
rimming a bullrush bowl,
we hunted, panting as the pheasants flew,

all but their patriarch who fell stone dead.
I watched his grandson go,
a gutshot cock that sped
to switchgrass tufted in the distant snow.

Under those drifts our harder hunt began.
While forty minutes passed
it burrowed, bolted, ran
until at last Fenian pinned it fast.

I floundered to a roadside willow stand,
collapsing on a log
where Feeney licked my hand.
Unworthy man, behold thy hunting dog.

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The Rockford Institute

*Selections
from*

translated by
Nancy Derr Polin

with a Preface by
Claude Polin

Selections From Augustin Cochin

*Translated by Nancy Derr Polin,
with a Preface by Claude Polin*

Augustin Cochin (1876-1942) undertook a monumental task of editing the provincial press of the 19th century. He played a key role in the French Revolution. His work was a major contribution to the study of the French Revolution and the French Republic. His work was a major contribution to the study of the French Revolution and the French Republic. His work was a major contribution to the study of the French Revolution and the French Republic.

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Paradise Lost

by Roger D. McGrath

"Whatever starts in California unfortunately has an inclination to spread."

— President Jimmy Carter

On a Sunday afternoon late in June, Tony Bologna was driving home with his sons, Michael and Matthew, from a family barbecue. In San Francisco's Excelsior district Bologna got stuck in an intersection, temporarily blocking a car from making a left-hand turn. Bologna began backing up, but evidently not quickly enough. Gunfire from an AK-47 erupted. Tony Bologna and Michael died on the spot. Matthew died two days later. The alleged shooter is Edwin Ramos, a native of El Salvador, member of the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) street gang, and an illegal alien. He is currently in jail, charged with three counts of murder.

One would assume that Ramos has been flying under the radar and that this was the first time he had come into contact with the authorities. Not hardly. He was arrested in March when police stopped him for driving a car with illegally tinted windows and no front license plate. In the car with Ramos was another MS-13 gang member, whom police observed hiding something. A search revealed a gun, which later proved to have been the weapon used in a double homicide. Ramos was released from custody, though, when the district attorney's office declined to prosecute him, contending that it would be difficult to prove that Ramos knew his fellow gang member had a gun on his person.

The San Francisco sheriff's department says deputies checked Ramos's immigration status in a federal database and discovered that Ramos was an illegal alien subject to deportation. The department claims it phoned Immigration and Customs Enforcement and was told that ICE was "not placing a detainer on him." ICE acknowledges receiving the call but says it occurred after Ramos had been set free. The discrepancy between the two versions of events remains, although ICE says it is investigating the matter.

Ramos should have been deported years earlier, however. In 2003, he and two others were arrested for assaulting a passenger on a San Francisco municipal bus. Ramos was convicted of a felony but, only 17 years old, was confined to a juvenile shelter for five months instead of jail. Four days after being released, Ramos was arrested for the attempted robbery of a pregnant woman, who was

walking down Mission Street in the middle of the day. Ramos was again convicted of a felony and, still a minor, was sent to the Log Cabin Ranch, a juvenile-detention facility in the hills south of San Francisco. He was released after serving seven months.

Two arrests. Two convictions. Yet, under San Francisco's illegal-alien sanctuary city policy, Ramos was shielded from deportation. Federal authorities only learned that Ramos was in the country illegally when he turned 18 and applied for temporary residency status. His application was rejected. Why he was not then deported is unclear. Ramos understood the game, however, and quickly married a woman who is a U.S. citizen. He then applied for status as a permanent resident alien. That request was working its way through the bureaucracy when he allegedly murdered the Bolognas.

San Francisco's sanctuary policy dates to 1985; more recently, SFPD Chief Heather Fong and Mayor Gavin Newsom have contributed mightily to the madness. In 2006, Fong released a bulletin to police officers severely limiting how and when they could communicate with ICE. In 2007, Newsom issued a directive prohibiting police or any other city employees from providing immigration information to the federal government unless specifically required by law to do so. Fong and Newsom combined to create a workplace environment that was intimidating and hostile for anyone who dared cooperate with ICE.

Investigations following the murders of the Bolognas revealed a little-known facet of San Francisco's sanctuary policy: Since 2006 Mayor Newsom's office has distributed nearly \$700,000 in grants to private groups who provide juvenile illegal-alien criminals with various free services, including immigration attorneys and "arts and cultural affirmation activities." The mayor's office said the grants were intended to aid the city's "proud tradition as a haven for immigrants." A haven is right. From 2005 to the present, the city has spent \$2.3 million to house juvenile illegal aliens.

The grants and the housing are only part of Newsom's contribution to San Francisco's sanctuary policy. Since 2006 the mayor has had juvenile probation officers fly criminal illegal alien youths back to their homelands—principally Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—instead of allowing ICE to take them into custody.

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If these criminal aliens were formally deported by the federal government, they would be prohibited from ever reentering the United States—a tragedy for everyone except American citizens. In May of this year federal agents intercepted a San Francisco probation officer and his juvenile offenders as they were changing planes in Houston on their way to Central America. Stung by the revelation, Mayor Newsom announced that he has terminated the program. The flights had cost San Francisco \$39,000.

With the flight program ended, the city tried a new tack. Thirteen juvenile illegal-alien drug dealers were shipped to group homes for probationers in San Bernardino County, hundreds of miles south of San Francisco. Twelve of the 13 criminals walked away from the unguarded homes almost immediately, and only two have been captured. “The county is exploring every option to recoup all our police expenses,” said San Bernardino County Supervisor Gary Ovitt. “This lunacy needs to stop now.” Feeling the heat, Newsom announced that he would end the relocation program.

Liberal San Franciscans, once smugly proud of the city’s unlawful failure to cooperate with federal authorities, have been uncharacteristically quiet of late. Perhaps the poignant sight of Tony Bologna’s widow, Danielle, crying in anguish during radio and television interviews has caused some of them to understand the consequences of their city’s protection of illegal aliens. Gavin Newsom, the mayor who gave us same-sex marriage, divorced his first wife, had an affair with his campaign manager’s wife, and dated a teenager, seems unperturbed by all the fuss. He plans to run for governor of California in 2010.

Another California mayor with gubernatorial ambitions is Anthony Villaraigosa. His Los Angeles is also a sanctuary city, and the consequences here have been just as tragic. In early March, Jamiel Shaw, a football player at Los Angeles High, was walking home from school. He almost made it. When he was only three houses shy, a car pulled alongside him, and gunfire filled the air. Shaw collapsed to the ground, dead. Police later arrested Pedro Espinosa, a 19-year-old illegal alien from Mexico, and charged him with murder.

Espinosa was known to local police and the criminal-justice system. He was a member of the Hispanic 18th Street gang and had served time in both the California Youth Authority and in the Los Angeles County Jail. He was released from jail only the day before he allegedly shot Shaw. His illegal-alien status was never reported to ICE. His case is not unique. ICE estimates that 40,000 of the 170,000 inmates in Los Angeles jails each year are illegal aliens. Contributing to the problem is the LAPD’s notorious Special Order 40, which prohibits police officers from inquiring about the immigration status of those they arrest or those they have contact with on the streets.

Mayor Villaraigosa is proud of the city’s sanctuary policy. He says that he represents California’s future. I’m afraid

he’s right; as Tony Villar, Mayor Villaraigosa grew up on the predominantly Latino east side. His mother had been born here, but his father was an illegal alien from Mexico. After attending East Los Angeles Junior College, Villar transferred to UCLA in 1972 through affirmative action. He spent three years at UCLA but failed to graduate. He did rise, however, to the leadership of the campus chapter of Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, known commonly as MEChA. MEChA advocates the reconquest of the American Southwest, which it calls Aztlán, from “the foreigner ‘gabacho’ who exploits our riches and destroys our culture. . . . We declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán.”



Melanie Anderson

Villar’s principal target at UCLA was the Chicano Studies Center. One of MEChA’s protests at the center resulted in thousands of dollars’ worth of damage. Villar deemed the center’s director, Rudolfo Alvarez, as far too moderate because he refused to support “the liberation of Aztlán.” Protests and demonstrations eventually led Alvarez to resign.

The media has been conspicuously silent about Villar’s leadership role in an organization whose motto is “*Por La Raza todo; Fuera de La Raza nada*” (“For the Race everything; Outside the Race nothing”). Can anyone imagine the media allowing a white mayor’s membership in, say, the American Nazi Party to go unnoticed? The excuse of youthful indiscretion cannot be used. When Mayor Villaraigosa was asked during an interview on The John and Ken Show on KFI-AM 640 radio if he still supported MEChA’s mission and goals, he refused to answer.

Several years after his days leading MEChA at UCLA, Villar returned to campus and completed the classes he still needed for an undergraduate degree. He then enrolled at the unaccredited People’s College of Law. He graduated but failed in four attempts to pass the bar exam. Unable to practice law, he became a “union organizer.” In 1994, he was elected from a Latino district to the Califor-

nia State Assembly and, aided by the Hispanic Caucus, became speaker in 1998. He left the legislature and ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 2001. He then won a seat on the city council and again ran for mayor in 2005. His mayoral victory made him the first person of Mexican descent to hold the office since 1872. He will not be the last. Los Angeles is now more than 50-percent Latino. Non-Hispanic whites make up less than 30 percent of the city's population. White children are only eight percent of the school population.

I have heard many white politicians in California, nearly all Republicans, claiming that "conservative social values" and "family values" are held dear by Latinos. Villar's lack of both has not hurt him. Before he married Corina Raigosa in 1987, he fathered two children out of wedlock by two different women. While married to Raigosa he had an affair with a friend's wife (the mother of their godchild) and with a reporter for a Spanish-language television station. He and his wife are now divorced. He also plans to run for governor in 2010.

With Gavin Newsom running San Francisco and Antonio Villaraigosa running Los Angeles, and both eager to run the state, there seems little hope for California. However, California is on the verge of a financial collapse, and out of that may come some changes—purely out of necessity—for the better. As I write this, the state is in its 69th day without a budget. Projections for fiscal year 2008-09 indicate a budget deficit of \$15-17 billion. Republican legislators, a minority, are refusing to approve any new form of taxation or any increase in existing taxes. Democrats, not willing to make any significant cuts in spending, have proposed both new taxes and increasing existing taxes.

California does not have a revenue problem; it has a spending problem. In fiscal year 2003-04, before Arnold Schwarzenegger came into office to rescue us, California spent \$75 billion. In 2007-08, after four years under a self-described fiscal conservative, we spent \$107 billion. State revenues increased every year—23 percent over four years—principally from property taxes, which increased concomitantly with the fantastic appreciation in real estate. Rather than reduce state debt or save for bad economic times, the state legislature went on a spending spree. Governor Schwarzenegger went along for the ride, displaying none of his vaunted business sense and evidently having no stomach for a fight. Total state indebtedness now exceeds \$60 billion, real money even for Everett Dirksen.

According to the Tax Foundation, the tax burden for California residents is the sixth highest in the country. Moreover, in the most important areas of taxation, income and sales tax, California ranks first. For property tax, California is ranked 20th based on collections per household or 45th based on a percentage of home value. If it were not for Proposition 13, passed by the initiative process in 1978, California would undoubtedly rank first

in property tax also.

Sacramento's voracious appetite for revenue was satisfied during the last few years by the appreciation in real estate and by a special bond measure that Schwarzenegger convinced the voters to approve in 2004. The sale of bonds put \$15 billion into the California coffers, but the last of that money has been spent, and taxpayers have to come up with \$1.5 billion annually to service the debt for years to come. Sacramento also pays more than five billion dollars per year to service other debt, for a total of nearly seven billion dollars.

While the costs of any particular project, salary, or pension plan to the state can be debated, it would seem that the estimated \$12 billion that California spends each year on illegal aliens—for schools, welfare, medical care, and crime—would inspire immediate action. Although the deportation of those here illegally would eliminate most of the budget deficit, no Democratic legislator and only a few Republicans have publicly called for doing so.

Many counties, especially those with large illegal-alien populations, are also facing budget crises. Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich, about the only public official in Los Angeles with any guts, had his office analyze the cost of illegal aliens to the county: medical care, \$400 million; criminal justice, \$250 million; and welfare (CALWORKS and food stamps), \$420 million, for a total of more than \$1 billion. This staggering sum does not include the largest cost of all—education, which probably runs another five billion dollars per year, if both illegal-alien students and students born here but to illegal-alien parents are included.

With California's economic growth slowing and property values declining, the costs for illegal aliens simply cannot be sustained without new taxes or significant increases in old taxes. As it is, thousands of businesses have relocated to other states, and tens of thousands of long-time California residents are now living outside the once Golden State. In the days of Democratic Gov. Pat Brown and Republican Gov. Ronald Reagan, California consumed one-third less in taxes as a proportion of personal incomes than the state does today. Yet, water projects, freeways, and universities were built and expanded and debts were easily serviced. The budget was balanced. Homes were affordable, schools were good, and illegal aliens few. The population was 85-percent white. Immigrants came from Europe and were assimilated almost immediately. No one conceived of the day when we would have to "Press one for English."

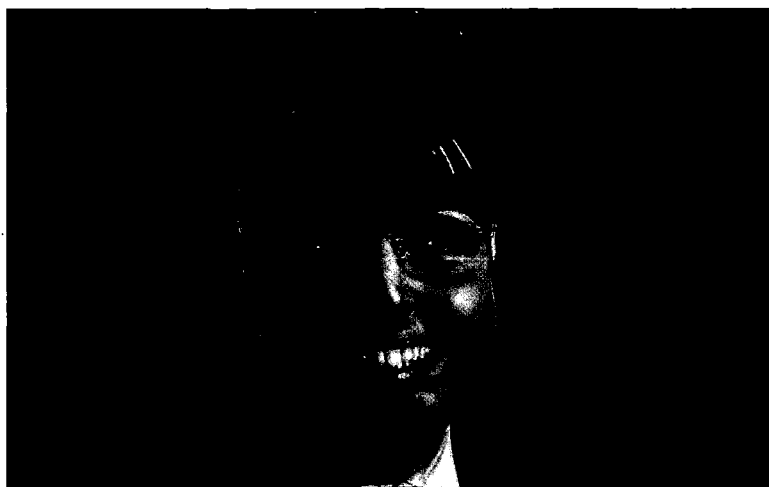
California was once a paradise. We who were born and reared here never considered the possibility that we would lose our paradise or that whites would become a minority—just like those living in other states never thought the illegal-immigrant invasion was anything more than a California phenomenon. Be warned. There is nothing stopping your state—other than a courageous and aroused citizenry—from suffering the same fate.



The Promise and Peril of Identity Politics

Hope in a Dismal Season

by Tom Piatak



Melanie Anderson

George W. Bush is a stunningly and deservedly unpopular president. His approval ratings rival Nixon's after Watergate, and the Republicans largely avoided any mention of him at their convention in St. Paul, a convention from which Bush was conspicuously absent. Under his leadership, we have become embroiled in a war that has cost thousands of American lives and billions of dollars, witnessed middle-class incomes stagnate as our manufacturing base has continued to disappear and our budget and trade deficits have soared, and become enmeshed in a financial crisis that has already seen government bailouts for Bear Stearns, Freddie Mac, and Fannie Mae; the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers; and the purchase of a failing Merrill Lynch by the Bank of America. We may yet see a more general collapse of an economic system built on oceans of debt. And yet, as of this writing, Republican John McCain is neck and neck with Barack Obama in the polls, and even held a slim lead over Obama following the Republican convention. How can this be?

The answer may be found in the reaction to McCain's selection as his running mate of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, a figure who now enjoys a higher approval rating than McCain or Obama, not to mention the hapless Joe Biden, who is traveling the country in a chartered 737 that is 80-percent empty because so few reporters are covering him. Palin has helped solidify McCain as the candidate, broadly speaking, of what is called Middle America, a term roughly synonymous with the conservative portion of America's white middle class. Many see in Palin a re-

flection of themselves: She first got involved in politics through the local PTA; she is not a multimillionaire; and she is not part of any establishment. Her husband does manual labor and belongs to a union. And she exhibits, or at least projects, some of the grit and defiance characteristic of the frontier women Roger McGrath has written about in *Chronicles*.

The hysterical reaction to Palin shows what the left thinks of Middle America. The *New York Times*' Frank Rich detected in Palin's convention speech not only "the vitriolic animus of right-wing populism preached by [Westbrook] Pegler and McCarthy and revived by the 1990s culture wars," but racism, as shown by the fact that Palin addressed a "virtually all-white audience" in St. Paul and "mocked Obama's history as a community organizer in Chicago." Underlying Palin's appeal was

an abject fear of change. Fear of a demographical revolution that will put whites in the American minority by 2042. Fear of the technological revolution and globalization that have gutted those small towns and factories Palin apotheosized. And, last but hardly least, fear of illegal immigrants who do the low-paying jobs that Americans don't want to do and of legal immigrants who do the high-paying jobs that poorly educated Americans are not qualified to do. . . . But the ultimate hypocrisy is that these woebegone, frightened opponents of change, sworn enemies of race-based college admission initiatives, are now demanding their own affirmative action program for white folks applying to the electoral

Contributing editor Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.

college. They want the bar for admission to the White House to be placed so low that legitimate scrutiny of Palin's qualifications, record and family values can all be placed off limits.

Rich's words drip with contempt for the people he wants to see swept away by mass immigration and globalization. Is it any wonder that they prefer Palin to Rich's favored candidate, who entertained an audience of rich leftists in San Francisco by expressing his own disdain for the denizens of the heartland who "cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations"?

Not to be outdone, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* found a college professor named Catherine Stock to attack Palin for being from the Pacific Northwest, a region "defined by its history of intolerance, resentment, antistatism, and violence," where "only six counties are more than 5 percent African-American." According to Stock, "we must never forget that in the late 20th century, ultra-Christian, anti-statist and white-supremacist groups flourished in the states of the Pacific Northwest—called by many the 'Great White Northwest'—the very region that Sarah Palin and her family call home." As if Palin's being from Alaska were not sinister enough, there are her religious beliefs—"dangerously close to those of the Christian Identity movement"—and her husband's membership in "a political party whose members favored secession for Alaska, suggesting an affiliation with radical antistatism." Stock concludes: "[I]t is hard to know where [Palin] stands on issues of race, equality, and diversity. Thus it is high time to review the cultural ideals and models of the radical rurals from the Great White Northwest and find out for sure where Gov. Palin stands." No, this is not a parody from *The Onion*, but a serious opinion piece written by a credentialed member of the academic elite and appearing in a major American newspaper. Apparently, attending a political convention that has too many white delegates, or being from a part of the country that has too few blacks, is now a mark of shame.

The specific focus of the attacks is on Palin's challenge to the left's belief that the central defining value of all right-thinking people is support for legal abortion and mandatory sex education. After all, what shocked the media was not that Bristol Palin had engaged in fornication—an activity regularly lauded in the press and glamorized in all the offerings of Hollywood—but that she had not been supplied with condoms and a check made out to the nearest abortionist. And there were ugly criticisms of the fact that Palin had not murdered her youngest son when she learned that he would be born with Down syndrome. The Obama campaign even reacted to Palin's nomination by starting an ad campaign attacking John McCain's professed pro-life stance, no doubt intended to stir fear that, if the crazy Palin makes it to the White House, women will no longer be free to kill unborn handicapped children or

unborn children conceived during youthful fornication.

The clearest example of this variety of leftist hatred for Palin was that offered by Cintra Wilson in *Salon*:

What her Down syndrome baby and pregnant teenage daughter unequivocally prove, however, is that her most beloved child is the antiabortion platform that ensures her own political ambitions with the conservative right. The throat she's so hot to cut is that of all American women. . . . Bristol Palin will no doubt be a fine example as first teen, particularly now that her mother is inflicting an old-fashioned shotgun wedding on the hapless, horny, condomless youth who impregnated her.

In somewhat more refined circles, the *New York Times*' Maureen Dowd dismissed Palin as "the glamorous Pioneer Woman, packing a gun, a baby and a Bible"; the head of the Democratic Party in South Carolina claimed that Palin's "primary qualification [for vice president] seems to be that she hasn't had an abortion"; and Dr. Andre Lalonde, executive vice president of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, worried that Palin's example would encourage other women not to abort their Down syndrome children. (At the far-less-refined end of the leftist spectrum, there was the blog purporting to be from Palin's Down-syndrome son, featuring such witticisms as "Thank you abastinse educashun for making sister a mommy too," and "They no evolushun. I am creachism. I am miracle of Lord!") With many more voices on the left expressing sentiments such as these, is it any wonder, as Cintra Wilson wrote, that the Republicans have so "successfully framed themselves as the custodians of Christian ethics and conservative family values"?

The fact that Palin struck a chord with so many is a positive sign. It is healthy that millions of Americans still respond to evocations of small-town life and the frontier. It is healthy that millions of Americans reveled in Palin's convention mockery of a corrupt and effete leftist elite that wishes to erase the last vestiges of Christian morality and pride in the America that existed before the cultural revolutions of the 1960's. And it is healthy that millions of Americans recoiled from the type of attack launched on Palin by the media and the Obama campaign.

Unfortunately, John McCain is advocating policies that will undermine and eventually destroy the Middle America that has embraced Palin. McCain's thoughts on economics have been shaped by the likes of Phil Gramm, the former water boy of Wall Street in the Senate, and now the vice chairman of a Swiss bank, who resigned as an advisor to McCain after describing the current economic downturn as a "mental recession" and denouncing those worried about the state of the economy as "whiners." (It's easy to view worries about the economy as "whining" from the commanding heights of a Swiss bank.) But his other comments in that interview were equally troublesome. In

addition to claiming that “we have benefited greatly” from globalization and advocating more immigration on the grounds that “The American story is a story of immigration,” Gramm said, with a straight face, “We’ve never been more dominant; we’ve never had more natural advantages than we have today.” Apparently, Gramm regards stagnant incomes, massive trade and fiscal deficits, and an unprecedented dependence on foreigners as signs of strength. Then again, the type of deregulation of the financial sector that Gramm advocated in the Senate helped bring on the Enron debacle and the current financial crisis. Gramm is being touted as a possible treasury secretary in a McCain administration. And McCain is foolish enough to take economic counsel as well from former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, an outspoken advocate of outsourcing. (“There is no job that is America’s God-given right anymore.”) Her reward for failure at HP? A severance package worth \$42 million.

Anyone who listens to Gramm and Fiorina on economics is going to follow policies detrimental to the type of voters flocking to Sarah Palin, as McCain’s own words and deeds make clear. During the primaries, McCain told voters in Michigan that the good jobs aren’t coming back, while voicing support for environmental regulation that would make his statement more of a promise than a warning. Indeed, McCain supports legislation that would require American industry to buy permits for emitting carbon dioxide, to the tune of some five trillion dollars in the coming decades, while opposing tariffs on imports from such leading carbon emitters as China, India, Brazil, and Mexico. The effect of enacting such legislation without a tariff provision is predictable: U.S. industries will move their operations abroad to avoid the need to purchase expensive permits, and the Americans who used to work in those industries will lose their jobs. But McCain seems to believe that “Let Them Eat Solar Panels” is sound economic policy. Despite his campaign slogan “Country First,” the economic portion of his convention speech could have been titled “Globalism First.” McCain repeatedly insists that the demands of the “global economy” need to be met, come what may, and he told reporters in July, before jetting off to Colombia to press for more free trade, that “I need to convince [workers that] the consequences of protectionism and isolationism could be damaging to their future.”

On immigration, McCain remains committed to hastening the day when whites become a minority in the United States for the first time in our history. Speaking to the National Association of Latino Elected Officials in June, McCain made a perfunctory promise to secure our borders, but added that “we must not make the mistake of thinking that our responsibilities will end with that accomplishment. We have economic and humanitarian responsibilities as well, and they require no less dedication from us in meeting them.” This is a reference to the amnesty bill McCain cosponsored in the Senate, which would have

both legalized millions of illegal immigrants and encouraged millions more to join them. More recently, McCain’s campaign has run a Spanish-language ad criticizing the Democrats for the fact that there is “no guest worker program,” “no path to citizenship,” and for not being “on our side”—where “our” refers to Hispanics.

Even on abortion, McCain is unreliable. On February 3, the *Washington Post* reported McCain’s statement that “It’s not social issues [that] I care about.” And on August 19, 1999, McCain told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “[C]ertainly in the short term, or even the long term, I would not support the repeal of Roe v. Wade which would then force X number of women in America to [undergo] illegal and dangerous operations.” In the same interview, McCain stated he would not have a “litmus test” for judicial nominees. McCain’s former Senate colleague, Rick Santorum, an indefatigable champion of the unborn, has stated that McCain did his best behind the scenes to prevent pro-life legislation from coming to a vote on the floor. Robert Novak has reported that McCain has described Justice Samuel Alito as “too conservative.” Novak has also reminded his readers that, back when Vermont Republican Jim Jeffords became an independent and began to caucus with the Democrats, McCain was in negotiations with the Senate Democrats to do the same thing. There is also McCain’s support for federal funding of embryonic stem-cell research (ESCR), which cannot be squared with principled belief in the pro-life cause. Indeed, McCain has recently launched an ad touting his support for more federal funding of stem-cell research, and his campaign spokesman, Brian Rogers, has stated that the ad, which does not distinguish between ESCR and other types of stem-cell research, is intended to reiterate McCain’s support for ESCR.

McCain, then, is an unworthy repository of the political hopes of the voters attracted to Palin. In order to advance, American conservatism needs an atmosphere in which those appealing to the identity of Middle Americans also advocate policies that advance their concrete interests. McCain is quite happy to appeal to Middle Americans on the basis of identity politics, even as he advocates policies that will result in their economic and demographic displacement. But the potency of that appeal does, in an otherwise dismal political season, offer some reason for hope. It is hard to see how paleoconservative ideas would advance in the political arena if appeals to Middle American identity no longer resonate, and the popularity of Sarah Palin in a year that should belong to the Democrats shows that such appeals retain their vitality because Middle Americans remain the decisive force in the electorate. Sarah Palin may well end up proving as big a disappointment as most recent Republican politicians have been, but the fact that millions of Americans responded so positively to the speech she gave and the image she projects suggests that, one day, there may actually be a political market for the ideas and policies that will help to preserve the America Palin’s fans wish to preserve. <◇

The Burden of Racial Guilt

A New Declaration of Independence

by Hugh Barbour, O.Praem.

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."*

—The Unanimous Declaration of the
Thirteen United States of America

As I write I am sitting in Pitt County, North Carolina, where in 1775 my ancestor Matthias Moore signed along with his fellow citizens a declaration to King George III, called subsequently after the next year's fateful declaration "The Pitt County Declaration of Independence." Yet in reading the text I am struck by a fundamental difference from Jefferson's document:

We the Freeholders and inhabitants of the county of Pitt and town of Martinborough, being deeply affected with the present alarming state of this Province and all America—Do Resolve that we will pay all due allegiance to his majesty King George the third and endeavor to continue the succession of his crown in the Illustrious house of Hanover as by law established, against the present or any future wicked ministry, or arbitrary set of men whatsoever, at the same time we are determined to assert our rights as men and sensible that by the late acts of Parliament the most valuable Liberties and privileges of America are invaded and endeavor to be violated and destroyed and that under God the preservation of them depends on a firm union of the inhabitants and a sturdy spirited observation of the Resolutions of the General Congress, being shocked at the cruel scenes now acting in the Massachusetts Bay and determined never to become slaves to any power upon earth, we do hereby agree and associate under all ties of Religion, Honour, and regard for Posterity that we will adopt and endeavor to execute the measures which the General Congress now sitting at Philadelphia conclude on for preserving our constitution and opposing the execution of the several arbitrary Illegal acts of the British Parliament and that we will readily observe The Directions of our General Committee for the purpose aforesaid, the

Preservation of Peace and Good Order and Security of Individuals and private property.

Here there is no hint of independence at all; rather there is the assertion of loyalty to the house of Hanover and the respectful, if urgent, demands of subjects of the crown. There are no philosophical assertions about the rights of man or of a natural equality of all men under God, only the supposition of the rights of Englishmen, established by "the voice of justice and consanguinity," to borrow Jefferson's phrase from the latter declaration, a Virginian's momentary lapse into the mind-set of a pre-modern polity like that of his neighbors in the humbler colony to the south.

Similarly, a rather different document from Jefferson's declaration, the Constitution of the United States of America, makes no universal affirmations about God or human nature, leaving to the several states their own local identities and "peculiar institutions," avoiding the imposition from a central government of any doctrine, rational or revealed. Another ancestor of mine, Willie Jones, was a noted proponent of these constitutionally guaranteed states' rights at the time of the formation of the Constitution. Now Willie had no legitimate heirs through his son, who never married, but only through his daughters. Thus it is that I have been carefully informed that, even though the Jones name is found in my family, it did not come from Willie Jones. You see, Willie was the largest slaveowner in North Carolina at the time, and his son had a lifelong liaison with a slave woman to whom he was purportedly faithful, and he had several children by her. His descendants have done their genealogical homework, since in the case of their ancestress there are clear records. It happens then that I have numerous and identifiable mulatto cousins in the sixth degree. They live in New York. This, my real, albeit collateral kindred to black people, reminds me of the original unity of the human race: that ultimately all men are descended from two first parents and, thus, are all at least cousins, and, if we are to believe the evidence of

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in Trabuco Canyon, California.*

mitochondrial DNA, all of those now alive on the earth are descended from a single woman in West Africa. (Note I do not say "single mother;" lest I provide a locus for today's "conservatives" to rhapsodize on premarital pregnancy as a model for a purely pro-life society.)

The political philosophers of the Enlightenment, even as they rejected the ancient Roman Christian polity of Europe, were still determined in their understanding of the *status quaestionis* by the perspective of Christian theology, which understands human society in terms of original justice and Original Sin. Hobbes and Locke both began their considerations by an appeal to the original state of human nature, whether radically flawed from the beginning, as in the case of Hobbes' satanic view of human relations, or originally good but incapable of safely attaining its end, as in the case of Locke. The state becomes on any account a necessary means of overcoming the inherent or acquired defects of our nature, a kind of natural agent of salvation.

These Enlightenment views of the original justice or injustice of the human race had this fatal difference from the view presented by Christian revelation: They had nothing to do with the actual, personal procreation of the individual members of a collective human society. The very notion of a human race as a state of affairs dependent on human generation and ties of blood is utterly eliminated. There was no accompanying history of how this state of affairs came to be, just the presentation of government as the dire or benign necessity of a fallen nature. The humanity in which there obtains the *bellum omnium contra omnes* or the right to a liberty inadequately guaranteed is an abstract entity, not the effect of a personal history of the descendants of Adam. It is to this original antigenealogical error that most of the difficulties of modern states in dealing with the question of individual liberty, equality, and authority can be traced.

In no field is this clearer than in the inability of modern society to deal with questions of human equality or inequality without ideological hysteria, whether by extremes of oppression or of license. Let us take a look at the serenely premodern perspective of Thomas Aquinas to see how true this is.

In the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas deals with the nature of man in his ideal state before the Fall. This ideal state is for him historical, and its hypothetical continuation provides a sort of default for determining what is most truly human from what is simply a consequence of human sin. In the fourth article of Question 96, he answers the query whether men would have been equal in the primitive state:

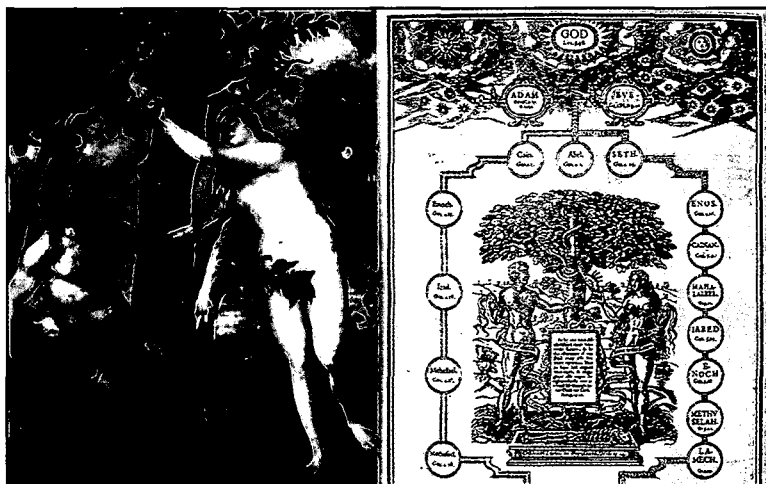
We must needs admit that in the primitive state there would have been some inequality, as regards sex, because generation depends upon diversity of sex: and likewise as regards age; for some would have been born of others; nor would sexual union

have been sterile.

Moreover, as regards the soul, there would have been inequality as to righteousness and knowledge. For man worked not of necessity, but of his own free-will, by virtue of which man can apply himself, more or less, to action, desire, or knowledge; hence some would have made a greater advance in virtue and knowledge than others.

There might also have been bodily disparity. For the human body was not entirely exempt from the laws of nature, so as not to receive from exterior sources more or less advantage and help: since indeed it was dependent on food wherewith to sustain life.

So we may say that, according to the climate, or the movement of the stars, some would have been born more robust in body than others, and also greater, and more beautiful, and all ways better disposed; so that, however, in those who were thus surpassed, there would have been no defect or fault either in soul or body.



Melanie Anderson

Thus inequality, whether acquired by moral and intellectual development, or as the natural result of bodily differences, is part of the original state proper to human nature. Inequality in human society is not a defect, but part of the original order of creation. So true is this that there would have been a real subjection of men to their masters, even before the fall, although not the subjection of slavery but of natural preeminence, as we read in the next article of the same question, which answers the query whether some men would have been masters to others in the primitive state:

Mastership has a twofold meaning. First, as opposed to slavery, in which sense a master means one to whom another is subject as a slave. In another sense mastership is referred in a general sense to any kind of subject; and in this sense even he who has the office of governing and directing free men, can be called a master. In the state of innocence man could

have been a master of men, not in the former but in the latter sense. This distinction is founded on the reason that a slave differs from a free man in that the latter has the disposal of himself, as is stated in the beginning of the *De Metaphysica*, whereas a slave is ordered to another. So that one man is master of another as his slave when he refers the one whose master he is, to his own—namely the master's use. And since every man's proper good is desirable to himself, and consequently it is a grievous matter to anyone to yield to another what ought to be one's own, therefore such dominion implies of necessity a pain inflicted on the subject; and consequently in the state of innocence such a mastership could not have existed between man and man.

But a man is the master of a free subject, by directing him either towards his proper welfare, or to the common good. Such a kind of mastership would have existed in the state of innocence between man and man, for two reasons. First, because man is naturally a social being, and so in the state of innocence he would have led a social life. Now a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless under the presidency of one to look after the common good; for many, as such, seek many things, whereas one attends only to one. Wherefore the Philosopher says, in the beginning of the *Politica*, that wherever many things are directed to one, we shall always find one at the head directing them. Secondly, if one man surpassed another in knowledge and virtue, this would not have been fitting unless these gifts conduced to the benefit of others, according to 1 Peter 4:10, "As every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another." Wherefore Augustine says (*De Civitate Dei* xix,14): "Just men command not by the love of domineering, but by the service of counsel": and (*De Civitate Dei* xix,15): "The natural order of things requires this; and thus did God make man."

Thus it is that a natural inequality and a natural subjection are the original racial inheritance of human society, and this is seen as a requirement of liberty, not as its limitation.

Under what aspect are "all men created equal," then, for Saint Thomas? Surprisingly, for this we will have to go to the second part of his *Summa* for the discussion of Original Sin and its effects on the human beings descended directly, all of them, from our first parents.

There are two things in original sin: one is the privation of original justice; the other is the relation of this privation to the sin of our first parent, from whom it is transmitted to man through his corrupt origin. As to the first, original sin has no degrees, since the gift of original justice is taken away entirely; and privations that remove something

entirely, such as death and darkness, cannot be more or less, as stated above (Q73,A2). In like manner, neither is this possible, as to the second: since all are related equally to the first principle of our corrupt origin, from which principle original sin takes the nature of guilt; for relations cannot be more or less. Consequently it is evident that original sin cannot be more in one than in another.

There we have it: Since we are all equally related to our first parents, we are all equally affected by their moral fall. In the bodily order which transcends the Fall, this is not the case, since men are spread out in different climes with different customs, and their bodily inheritance is consequently, if only gradually, varied. It is this aspect of human equality that Locke was attempting to answer: the universal tendency to render our properly human happiness impossible of attainment and the need for some means to guarantee as far as possible this attainment. Given the fact, however, that all—rulers and ruled, bondsmen and free—are equally affected by this fallen state, the natural inequality upon which an ideal society would have been based is mightily altered by the consequences of the Fall. This is clear in the teaching that slavery as a form of social subjection would not have existed in the primitive state of man, even though every other form of human diversity would have been hierarchically ordered. Without the concrete sense of the unity of the human race by bodily descent, the modern theories of the state have been unable to distinguish adequately between a rightly ordered inequality and an effect of the Fall like slavery or its analogues, which ideally ought to be overcome.

Vive la différence, the French say. Is there such a thing as racial guilt? Yes indeed, and it is the only thing in which human beings are universally equal. The restoration of a lost order requires a keen sense of what renders individuals and societies wholesomely unequal, and the defense of such social institutions that protect and foster the diversity of inheritance and accomplishment: the family, property, letters, enterprise, soldiering, and sanctity, the things our colonial forebears were seeking to maintain by limited government. Whatever may be the case in other cultures that do not possess the Christian Roman traditions of Europe, we will not find our way back to this ideal unless we abandon the suspicion of ordered inequality, which is the bloodless, but bloodletting, inheritance of modernity. From this illegitimate patrimony we must declare our independence. The text of our Constitution is one place to start, where the first intention is "to establish a more perfect union." The Apostle, after all, tells us that all are one in Christ Jesus; he does not say all are equal. His successor, your writer, a white, male descendant of royal subjects and slavemasters, a relative of slaves, one of the "poor banished children of Eve," holds this truth to be self-evident.



Pro-Choice Christians

Shattering Nature's Glass Ceiling

by Aaron D. Wolf



Melanie Anderson

After eight years of George W. Bush's "culture of life," which included well over 4,000 U.S. military deaths in Iraq and an estimated 1.25 million Iraqi deaths, abortion is back on the front burner, thanks to the presence of Sarah Palin on national television. Few were "energized" about John McCain before she entered stage right on the TV screen. Sure, *pace* James Dobson, they had still planned to "get drunk and vote for McCain" if the weather was decent on Election Day, but now voting has (once again) become a matter of Christian duty. Ann Coulter summed up the mood of conservative Christians in her column, titled "The Best Man Turned Out to Be a Woman." Contrasting Mrs. Palin with other potential running mates, the fellow barracuda struck: "As for former governor of Pennsylvania Tom Ridge and Democratic Sen. Joe Lieberman, the other also-rans, I can think of at least 40 million unborn reasons she's better than either of them."

Conservative Christians are eager to see themselves in Sarah Palin. She likes guns. She's a fiscal conservative. She knows the name "Pat Buchanan." She knows what secession is. She's pretty cute. She has five children. She's even a churchgoer, and at a church or churches that believe the Bible, even if those churches don't quite interpret it the same way. All of this would have been window dressing if she wasn't clearly and demonstrably against abortion. Oh, but she is.

So now we're excited, energized. Sarah Palin is on

our team. She's more on our team than John McCain is. She grandfathers him into our team. She's John McCain's better angel. She's our angel. Whatever she does is great, and whatever *they* say in attacking her is just wrong, wrong, wrong!

Christian conservatives are a savvy lot when it comes to politics. They have their years of grassroots experience in the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition. They have learned from Rush, from Sean, from Bill, from Ann how to argue with a liberal and how to ignore the defeatist media. Turn that argument around. Track was conceived out of wedlock? *You're dang right he was. Sarah Palin's not afraid of sex and marriage!* She hasn't thought much about Iraq? *Heck, while you liberals are out there "thinking," she's sending her boy to the front lines!* Bristol is pregnant out of wedlock? *See above, pin-head! The Palins ♥ babies!*

In fact, every left-wing liberal-media criticism just underscores the fact that she is the perfect candidate. We need someone who is tough to stand up to the liberals. We need a pit bull. We need an Ann Coulter with lipstick.

And what about Hillary's glass ceiling? If that's all you care about, if you really want to be on the right side of history, how about this: We want a woman in the White House more than you do. "Our motto," says Ann Coulter, should be this: "Sarah Palin is only a heartbeat away!"

Now comes the ultimate hypocrisy from the ugly left: Sarah Palin has young children, including one with special needs. How can she choose government over home?

Well, that's just an outrage, says the pro-family Chris-

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tian Right. Here is Richard Land, the public voice of the Southern Baptist Convention, and a leader on the Christian Right:

Clearly, [Sarah Palin's] nomination's tapped into something, which I can observe as a white male but can't experience. My wife says to her Sarah Palin is what the feminists' movement was all about. You can have a family and a husband and a career; that you can do it all. My wife has a Ph.D. in psychology, she's in private practice as a psychotherapist.

I find these questions about "how can she take care of her children and be vice president" sexist. Nobody asked that question to any of the male candidates. That's a family decision. As long as she and her husband are comfortable with it and they seem to have done a wonderful job with the children they have, it's nobody's business.

Leave it to the left to be sexist. Christian conservatives know better, and they have worked for change for years. Debating atheist Sam Harris in a *Newsweek* forum, America's pastor Rick Warren noted that "All of the great movements forward in Western civilization were by believers. It was pastors who led the abolition of slavery. It was pastors who led the woman's right to vote. It was pastors who led the civil-rights movement. Not atheists."

After the fires of the Second Great Awakening, the old lights of established churches gave way to the new lights of revival, men free of authoritarian mantles, churches free of authoritarian polity. Feminists and evangelicals made common cause. In many cases, the two groups have been one and the same. Their chief constituency was the emerging Christian woman reformer, who was sensitive to the needs of children and minorities. She bought Beecher's Bibles and sent them to bleeding Kansas. She kept farm children from toiling in the heat. She raised her hatchet against the demon liquor with Carrie Nation, who called herself a "bulldog running along at the feet of Jesus, barking at what He doesn't like."

And yet, there was the realm of politics and government, the He-Man Woman Haters' Club with its glass ceiling and mahogany bar. If women could vote, argued that famous advocate for creationism in public schools, William Jennings Bryan, America would change. Women, said Bryan, are people too: "Shall the people rule?"

At the Democratic National Convention in Denver, exactly one hundred years ago, Bryan wanted to add universal suffrage to the party's platform. The very moral health of America was at stake. Of course, even back then there were naysayers—like Bryan's daughter Ruth, who told the *Rocky Mountain News* that woman suffrage would actually diminish the role of woman in society. "I believe it would lessen her influence," she said.

Right-wing nut jobs sabotaged the platform push in

Denver, some of them arguing that women should focus on their own husbands and children at home. To the women who wanted change, this was an outrage. "Of all the ridiculous ideas," squawked Utah delegate Mrs. Henry J. Hayward,

the very silliest is that suffrage interferes in any way with household or maternal duties. An interest in the questions of the day brightens a woman, takes her out of the daily rut of dishes, dusting and sweeping and gives her a common bond of interest with her husband. She can help to make conditions right for her children and can guide them with more wisdom. Then, too, a child must naturally respect a mother more when that mother is allowed a voice in the government.

If only Mrs. Henry J. Hayward, a Mormon and mother of nine, could have seen the stars align behind Sarah Baracuda, with baby Trig strapped on her chest, balancing work and family while firing her 30.06 through the glass ceiling.

We can hear echoes of Mrs. Henry J. Hayward in the energized apologies that are being sounded by conservative Christian pro-family and pro-life leaders. The Rev. Peter S. Sprigg, a former Baptist pastor who works for the Family Research Council, sees liberal misrepresentations of the traditional Christian view of women behind some of the criticisms of Sarah Palin:

The liberal stereotype of social conservatives, especially evangelicals, is that we think women should be perpetually barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen, rather than pursuing careers and assuming leadership roles in the political realm. So shouldn't a mother of five (including a pregnant teen and a special-needs infant) be a homemaker, instead of trying to govern Alaska or run for vice president?

Well, yes—if she chooses to.

You see, the notion that women have a natural calling, confirmed in Scripture and established in the tradition of Western civilization, is really an illusion, a fantasy dreamed up by liberals. Conservatives know better.

The Christian Right seems to be answering a question that the left isn't really asking. The left is more interested in alleging hypocrisy when it comes to the out-of-wedlock pregnancy of young Bristol Palin. Barney Frank and Gloria Steinem are in a tizzy about the obvious failure of Alaskan abstinence programs, but they aren't suggesting that a mother shouldn't hold political office. That suggestion is bubbling forth from the blogosphere, from a small number of dissatisfied conservatives—homeschoolers, mothers of large families, the fringe elements who wouldn't likely vote for McCain anyway.

Conservative Christian activists sense that the question is looming in the backs of the minds of at least a fair

amount of voters, and so they are answering it under the pretense of responding to liberal-media attacks. A small number of them are engaging in bizarre debates over Deborah driving a stake through Obama's head or Esther using her "hotness" to save Israel. Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and regular talk-show guest, is wrestling with the issue:

I am doing my best to be honest—and not hypocritical—about how I see this new situation. I could not imagine this in my own family, nor, I am confident, could the vast majority of those conservative Christians who are celebrating the nomination of Gov. Palin as Vice President. I have full confidence that my wife Mary can lead and run anything, from General Motors to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Nevertheless, I also know that I, along with our children, would find our worlds turned upside down. Beyond this, I believe that she would be less happy, less fulfilled, and less strategically deployed. She runs a program that influences the lives of hundreds of women and serves on the board of directors of our local crisis pregnancy center, but her most significant impact will be on the lives of two children who cannot imagine life without her—and without her active engagement and motherly love.

Then again, Mohler observes, he has pictures of Queen Elizabeth and Margaret Thatcher on the walls of his (presumably theological) library. There must be exceptions to the rule; it is a matter of calling, and Sarah Palin may have chosen a different calling.

So why, then, is Dr. Mohler struggling to be honest and not hypocritical? Because, as his leftist interviewer points out, Southern Baptists stop short of allowing women to choose to pursue the ministry. Furthermore, Southern Baptists (along with a host of evangelicals) still believe that, as the Baptist Faith and Message puts it, "A wife . . . has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation."

Is there some contradiction at work here? No, says Mohler. "The reason for this is simple—the New Testament does not speak to this question [of women choosing a career in politics] in any direct sense."

And yet the New Testament does have a few clear things to say, including this favorite passage of homeschooling mommies with large families, from Titus 2, in which Saint Paul commands "young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

That phrase "keepers at home" is a sticker. It means a great deal more than hockey games and PTA meetings. It implies a God-given role for women—marriage, children, household. Of course, it also implies an entirely different culture, one in which there is such a thing as a household

with both a head and a keeper. But this culture is not merely the one Saint Paul happened to find himself in: It is the one he prescribes, the Christian one. And there is no exception made for moose-gutting pit bulls with lipstick who feel called to be the next Margaret Thatcher.

Deep down, I suspect that more thoughtful Christian conservatives such as Mohler know this. That might explain the hemming and hawing: "It would be hypocritical of me to suggest that I would be perfectly happy to have Christian young women believe that being Vice President of the United States is more important than being a wife and mother."

And yet the Christian Right cannot find a verse in the New Testament that says "Woman, thou shalt not be President." Of course, they will struggle to find one that says "Woman, thou shalt not have an abortion" as well. Nor will they find one that says "Man, thou shalt not—indeed, thou *canst* not—marry another man." What they find and cite are passages that mention that God knew Jeremiah in his mother's womb and knit together David in the secret place, that children are a blessing, that thou shalt not kill, that homosexual behavior is sinful, that He blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply."

The Christian Faith is not pro-life or pro-marriage or pro-heterosexuality or Creationist. It is the truth about all that God made and the way that He made it.

That Faith *cultures* life by accepting what has been revealed: It does not create an abstract "culture of life." It obeys the will of God for mankind, as seen through nature, through Creation, specifically in Scripture, and as witnessed by tradition. Saint Paul knew this and argued from the received wisdom. He grounds his command to women that they submit to their husbands and conduct themselves with "shamefacedness and sobriety" in the natural order: "For Adam was created first, then Eve."

Take away an implicit belief in the natural order, and what are you left with? Abstract, liberal arguments about human rights, about women's rights, about "complementarianism," about different roles in different spheres, different callings in different times. You are left with professional Christian women crusaders who forsake their own children to save those of the world, bulldogs with hatchets for whom shamefacedness is weakness, "First Dude" Mr. Moms who nurture while the wife is "standing up to the old boy network."

G.K. Chesterton wrote that woman suffrage is abusive to the female sex, amounting to the "modern surrender of women." In fact, he added, involving women in politics is not an act of feminism but of masculinism—of making women into men. What does it tell us about today's Christian conservative leaders, or about the pro-life movement, that they want to thrust Sarah Palin into the White House, baby in tow? That they are turned on by Ann Coulter, or by a moose-gutting barracuda? What sort of moral and aesthetic chaos has infected the "culture of life" that it would abuse a woman in the name of saving babies?

Modern democratic politics, said Chesterton, is really about drunk men hollering at each other in a bar, about exaggerating their importance in order to win coercive power over others. Inviting women does not sanctify the bar: It degrades the ladies. "If you don't like the idea of men shouting at each other at the 'Blue Pig,'" he said, "you will not like its shadow."

In its shadow is Bristol Palin, deliberately humiliated before the whole crowd. And yet her mother wants power—the power to effect change. She risked young Trig's unborn life to stand before John McCain, her amniotic fluid leaking, and deliver a speech that would energize him. And because of it, she was invited to the Blue Pig to shout at the other side along with the rest of the louts. And she accepted because she has been schooled by her father, the "First Dude," her churches, and her Conservative Movement in the fine art of masculinization. She doesn't blink. She is a proud Feminist for Life.

Assume for one fleeting moment that the vice president, not the president, appoints federal judges and Supreme Court justices. Assume that Cindy McCain is wrong and that her husband really does want to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Assume that McCain doesn't really want to abort frozen babies and use their tiny bodies for research. Assume that McCain doesn't think that a child conceived in rape deserves to die, if the mother so chooses. It is still a violation of the natural order, on which conservatism and Christianity depend, to abuse a mother and her children. The way of faith honors women and respects women, refusing to strip them of their dignity by thrusting them into the base, crude, and meaningless game of modern democratic politics, filled with lies and exaggerations.

We don't need to reread the story of Deborah in the original Hebrew; we don't need to search history for examples of queens or prime ministers or matriarchs. Christians rooted in the natural law simply know that there is no greater good than for a woman to be what she was made to be, and their efforts to that end collectively are a culture of life. It is not enough to teach Creationism; we must believe in and respect the created order. Conservative Christianity apart from the natural order is neither conservative nor Christian. It is a monstrous mutation of the Enlightenment—the religion of choice apart from revelation, the religion of change in the face of tradition.

If an energized America makes history in November and puts John McCain in the White House, Sarah Palin will not have time for a lot of trivial, insignificant things that matter little to the abstract culture of life—to fix snacks for Piper, to take her to and from school every day, to help her with homework and stay home with her when she's sick. And when it's time for her grandchild to be born in January, she'll have an inauguration to attend to instead of her daughter. But the glass ceiling will be shattered, and its shards will have fallen on her and her family—and on the conservative Christians who valued the principle of life over life.

©

Four Firsts and a Last

for Dan Treat D.V.M.

by Timothy Murphy

Her first retrieve afield: a shotgun shell
fired and ejected with no warning.

How she adored that smell,
charcoal, sulfur and niter in the morning.

Her first bird was a crippled mourning dove.
She somersaulted down a ditch
head over heels in love,
buttoned her bird and bounded up the pitch.

Her first drake dropped beyond a refuge sign.
Wriggling under the lowest wire,
she swam a perfect line
as though posting a proof of her desire.

Her first loss was her superhuman ear.
Hand-signalled on an unmarked run,
she could no longer hear
whistling wingtips; even at last, the gun.

At fourteen she was walking into walls,
fouling the carpet, losing teeth.
Farewell to mallard calls
and decoy spreads, wild roosters on the heath.

To St. Francis of Fargo fell the chore,
the barbital a gentle thrust
to launch her from our shore.
The last look in her fearless eye was trust.

Spain Embraces Change

Canceling the Past

by José Javier Esparza

For the last four years, change has been in the air in Spain, following the election of Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. And thanks to his reelection in March of this year, we can look forward to more of the same.

There have been abrupt changes to the very structure of the government: new statutes regarding regional autonomy that recognize the "national" character of Spain's regions, thereby weakening the unity of the country.

There has been a radical shift in Spain's antiterrorist policy: In the name of the "peace process," the political spokesmen of terrorism have returned to public life, while victims of terrorism are being harassed by the authorities and pressure is being brought to bear on judges.

Change has come to our civic morality as well, through the legalization of homosexual "marriage," legislation in favor of transsexuals, and the adoption of fast-track divorce laws. Abortion laws are being amended to bring Spain closer to abortion on demand, euthanasia is being advocated, and embryonic stem-cell research is being promoted.

We now have a party line to tow with regard to our interpretation of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). "Historical memory" is now skewed in favor of the Republican (leftist) side of the conflict.

Change has meant the injection of leftist ideology into education and policies that reward indoctrination over academic performance.

There have been attacks on the Christian identity of Spanish society—government initiatives hostile to the Catholic Church, a diminishing role for religion in schools, and attempts to confine religion to the private sphere. We are also being encouraged to explore other faiths, especially Islam.

This has accompanied an emphasis on rapprochement with authoritarian regimes in Latin America and within the Islamic bloc, as well as support for Turkey's admission to the European Union.

Change has meant the toleration of huge waves of immigration, mass amnesties, ineffective control over the borders, and laxity in the expulsion of illegals, accompanied by

ongoing dialogue that actually encourages them to come.

Spain's course today is the direct result of trends promoted for a long time. One of these trends follows the general direction of the European left in recent years—toward the liquidation of any vestige of tradition. Another corresponds to a leftist path unique to Spain throughout her history: the path to self-hatred and self-annihilation, whereon everyone who promotes anything that is uniquely national and Spanish is identified as a reactionary. Zapaterism, the ideology driving those who hold the reins of power in today's Spain, is the synthesis of these two trends.

The socialism of Felipe González contradicted the traditional values of the Spanish people, but nobody feared (at least after 1984) that it would be necessary to rush to the door, ax in hand, to defend the things held most sacred. On the other hand, the socialism of Zapatero, with regard to the most important things in life (family, social order, religion, the right to life) is extraordinarily aggressive—all the more so for having been built upon such a meager majority. Felipe González's socialism was socialist; Zapatero's is nihilistic. This is terrifying. All things terrifying, however, are interesting. And what is interesting in Zapaterist socialism is that it reveals the true face of the Third Left.

The First Left was revolutionary and red: Russia in 1917, Germany in 1919, Spain in 1934 and 1936. Its paradise was Soviet Russia. The First Left ended up drowning in a bloodbath of the Gulag and the Cheka. Today only Castro survives.

The Second Left was reformist and white: the British Labor movement, Swedish and German social democracies, as well as French (Mitterrand) and Spanish (González) socialism. Its paradise was Sweden. The Second Left collapsed and died, a casualty of the mere inability to keep up the level of public spending required by the welfare state.

The Third Left is the granddaughter of revolutions discredited by butchery, and the daughter of experiments found to be impracticable because of financial incompetence. Its great challenge is to construct a new theoretical paradigm. On the left's fringes, nihilistic currents began to pop up under the banners of antiglobalization. And in the chapels of nostalgia, a new hagiography was being assembled that did not take its inspiration from the old Soviet and Swedish paradises, but from the Sexual Revolution, the Latin American insurgency, the perpetu-

*José Javier Esparza, a Spanish journalist, is the author of numerous books, including *El Bienio Necio: Crónica del Zapaterismo* (2006). This article was translated from the Spanish by Brooke Cadwallader.*

ally defeated Reds, libertarian pipe dreams, and militant Third Worldism. From these ingredients, a doctrine has been concocted—the “ideology of cancelation.”

The ideology of cancelation is the conviction that the happiness of peoples and the progress of nations require the cancelation of everything born of the traditional order: fatherland, family, morals, upbringing, identity. These are the legacy of a dark and retrograde world. This liquidation of the past will not be carried out in the old way—with red banners flying and heads mounted on stakes. Such methods will no longer do, because they frighten the masses. What we are faced with is a movement soft and gentle in appearance, heavily cloaked in ritual invocations of dialogue and peace. This “sub-revolution” does not focus on the structure that holds up state power—the economy, the military—but pays attention instead to the true foundations of collective life: belief systems, customs, education. The nation is a decaying concept; the family is an institution from the past; religion is a superstition; morality is but a question of perspective; the law should adjust to circumstances. This is the mind-set that is being imposed on Spain from the corridors of power.

Just as the old Protector State of the 1980's was a caricature of a father, so this new Mommy State is somewhat of a caricature of a mother. It creates an air of intimate personal attachment as touching as it is ridiculous—passing out condoms in schools to avoid traumatic pregnancies; justifying military policy by arguments for humanitarian charity; making provisions for homosexual “marriage” because, “if they love each other, why not let them marry?”

The ideology of cancelation was not invented by Prime Minister Zapatero nor even by Spanish socialism. It made its first appearance in the West during the 1960's, with the student revolts in California and in Paris. Its operating principle is that, to change the world, one has to change the people; and to change the people, one has to change their values. If the people do not want to change, it is because, as Erich Fromm wrote, they are afraid of freedom. The tidal wave of 1968 saw the convergence of other currents: a popularization of Freudian-Marxist theories gave sexual liberation an essential role in breaking up traditional institutions. Yet the great masses of Western societies, who were eager to hear the message of liberation and hedonism following the harsh years of postwar discipline, continued to adopt bourgeois ways. Finally, there was the power of communist propaganda on the cultural front, which helped to weaken the opposition.

Afterward, the demands of 1968 became so individualistic and hedonistic (the “right to an orgasm,” for instance); yet at the same time so bourgeois, that the more serious communists, such as Pasolini, condemned the

movement. From those upheavals arose the New Left in the West and especially in Europe. This was a left that not only renounced the dictatorship of the proletariat but set about altering the playing field of the revolution, of social change. Alongside the march through the institutions, it opted for a “micro-revolution” in people's daily lives, as André Gorz put it. Thus, the left's ideological arsenal filled up with new weapons—euthanasia, sexual education for children, abortion. It is not difficult to spot in all of this a “lite” version of the grand revolutionary projects of the pre-war period, but the decisive difference lies in the strategic objective: Political change is now subordinated to long-term social change.

When the Protector State proved to be impracticable—in Great Britain, in the Scandinavian countries, and in France and Germany—the European left embraced the “micro-revolution” in daily life. Thus, the destruction of the traditional family, for instance, has figured more prominently on their agenda than have gains for workers on the social and economic fronts, particularly after the elephantine welfare state entered into crisis everywhere during the 1980's. While the figures of Reagan, Thatcher, and Kohl dominated the right, the seeds planted during the previous decades, in universities and in the press, continued to bear fruit. Though all of the applications of socialism had failed in practice, the voices of the left continued to be the ones that dictated where legitimacy lay, that decided what was good and what was bad, that shaped the opinions and prejudices of society.

The disintegration of the apparatus of state socialism (and, on a different order, the Soviet model) paradoxically facilitated the deployment of the ideology of cancelation. The left no longer struck fear into the hearts of the established order. The nationalization of the financial sector, the collectivization of the means of production, and government intervention in the market were torn to shreds. What remained for us to fear? The left now presented itself as loosening society's reins and freeing people from custom, and this gave the established order and the market no reason to squirm. In fact, it gave them comfort. The left offered well-calculated doses of “good feelings” so as to make the inconveniences of the omnipotent market more bearable.

If modernity has singularly attempted to liberate individuals from all traditional bonds, we are now witnessing one final and supreme effort to carry this process to its conclusion. But there is, of course, a drawback: Since the individual does not gain this emancipation autonomously but under the stewardship of an ideological system, his so-called freedom remains subject to a power structure that no longer rests on visible institutions. Instead, it operates within an intricate network where the powers of politics, finance, and the media are intertwined. This process makes power more invisible and thus renders opposition and resistance, and even simple dissent, more difficult. The logic of emancipation leads to a new logic

of domination.

This is the situation not only in Spain but throughout the West. It is characteristic of Zapatero's Spain, however, that this ideology is being spread from the center of power, institutionally, and without resistance.

The Spanish state has had a makeover. It no longer addresses citizens in imperious, stentorian tones, but seeks to cloak itself in the protective affability of a mother—laws preventing you from smoking, for your health; laws requiring you to wear reflective vests in your car, for your safety; laws to prevent obesity in children, for their well-being; laws so that students pass their courses without effort, for their happiness.

The Protector State was a social incarnation of that paternalistic state which conservatives had built in the 19th and 20th centuries. The first legislation regarding Social Security was sponsored by conservatives (Bismarck in Germany, Maura and Dato in Spain). Liberals came to dub the Protector State the "Daddy State," and, in a certain sense, they were right. The paternalistic state was the swan song of the type of patriarchal society known in this neck of the woods since the classical world. In the Daddy State, government took on all the attributes of a protective father.

Today we have gone a step further. The state has less power, and patriarchal society is vanishing, so the paternalism of the state has transformed into maternalism. Government now oversees people's comfort, their domestic well-being, their everyday health, their waistlines, and even their love life. Just as the old Protector State of the 1980's was a caricature of a father, so this new Mommy State is somewhat of a caricature of a mother. It creates an air of intimate personal attachment as touching as it is ridiculous—passing out condoms in schools to avoid traumatic pregnancies; justifying military policy by arguments for humanitarian charity; making provisions for homosexual "marriage" because, "if they love each other, why not let them marry?" Across the West, it will naturally take on different forms: In highly developed cultures, the Mommy State adopts the air of a grande dame; in Spain, it puts on a rather domesticated air, like that of a woman donning a pair of slippers.

Whatever its genteel form, we must not deceive ourselves: This is the same Mommy State that, in conformity with the "ideology of cancelation," fights to eliminate any restrictions on abortion, hurls proposals for euthanasia at society, and authorizes experiments with human embryos. And again, the discourse of emancipation leads, in practice, to domination.

Zapaterism also possesses uniquely Spanish features, especially in its disdain for Spanish history. This is not something invented by Zapatero, but a hoary tradition of the Spanish left, which Zapatero has carried to surprising extremes. Measures such as the reform of the *Estado de las Autonomías* or the peace process with ETA (a Basque separatist group) can only be understood in this context.

Our left does not clearly identify the Spanish nation with the people the way the European left does. Instead, it has identified the nation with the "exploitative classes." From this line of reasoning arise both a pent-up hostility toward the Spanish identity and a solidarity with certain forms of anti-Spanishness. In addition, the strategy of Zapatero's government is consistent with the leftist tradition which holds that Spain cannot progress except under the permanent hegemony of the selfsame left, a hegemony that would finally bring about the great modern revolution Spain has never had. Many of us thought the cliché of the "unresolved revolution" had been laid to rest after our long experience with socialism from 1982 to 1996, and by the establishment of an unmistakably leftist media and financial elite, and that for these reasons the tendency to identify the nation with a privileged class had been rendered objectively meaningless. Yet the ideological fallout from the crumbling of the Berlin Wall meant a resurgence of old obsessions. All it took was a new group of fresh faces in the Spanish socialist leadership.

This mind-set has every potential to take root in other societies—wherever the people do not know who they are and where they are going. The instinct to surrender to the barbarian first arises in the privileged classes and may be described as an inclination to back down in the face of an external threat. Here, the fear of losing what one possesses enters into the equation, as does a certain kind of guilty conscience, a disquieting feeling of having benefited from some injustice. Thus, frequently, we hear cries that "They're not so bad," or "Aren't we the ones who pose the real threat?" At this point, the only thing left to do is to throw open the gates.

For them, the history of Spain is filled with gigantic mistakes, and we will not be able to pick ourselves up until we have a revolution *à la française*. Spain will not be a worthy country until the left gets to shape her. And this conviction leads to the condemnation of the discovery of America, to the loathing of the Reconquista (the liberation of Spain from the Muslims), and to the extolling of our Muslim heritage. According to this view, regional separatist movements exist because our national unity has been a disaster. If we have terrorism, it is because Spain has never managed to understand irredentism. Spain, still identified with empire and the Counter-Reformation (*i.e.*, the "right"), is always the guilty party. This strictly Manichaean vision draws a thick line between good (the left) and bad (everything else). Little does it matter that there have been revolutions, constitutions, and orderly transitions. This interpretation of history simply dispenses with reality because it dispenses with time.

The condemnation of history brings with it an implicit messianic hope: If things have been this way until today, it is now up to the left to effect change, to return us to the righteous path. And the disintegration of Spain will not be called such, but rather an improvement in harmony; and a pact with terrorists will not be called a capitulation, but a message of peace.

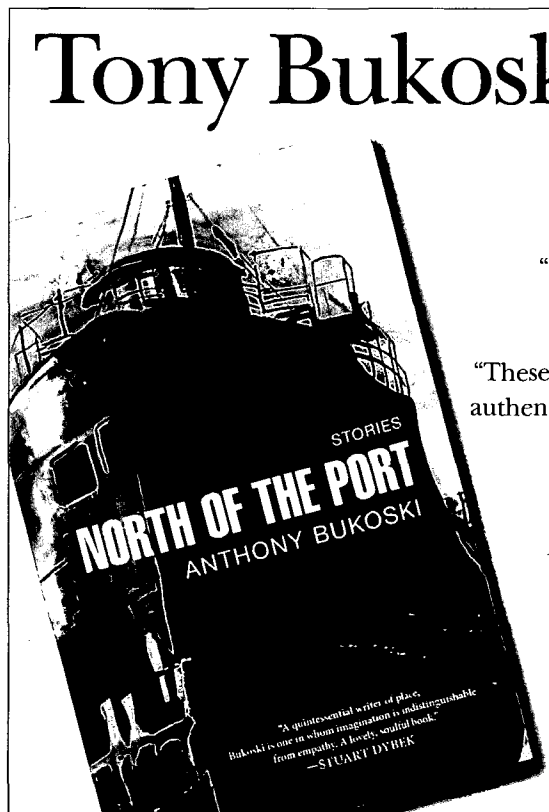
In the 1980's, Eduardo Subirats wrote that the greatest sin of the Spanish left lay in having built a social and political culture bereft of its national tradition. He added that the type of culture imposed by the left wiped the slate clean of all characteristically Spanish historical references. The result, after a couple of generations, has been a country ignorant of itself, if not self-loathing.

This inferiority complex has less to do with our national history than with the relative stature of the left within that history. The history of the Spanish left is a story of continuous failure, from the disaster of *La Gloriosa* (Spain's "Glorious Revolution" of 1868) and of the first republic, to the impotence of the resistance to Franco, to political incompetence under the Restoration, to trade-union opportunism under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, to the shameful chaos of the civil war. Thus, when the man of the left studies this history, two options remain for him: He may conclude that his tribe suffers from a rather lamentable lineage, or that Spain has never been worthy of such sublime people as Pablo Iglesias, Margarita Nelken, Largo Caballero, and Captain Condés. The first option

would demand some capacity for critical perspective and a willingness to examine one's own convictions. Most have taken the latter.

Perhaps the Spanish left is afflicted with a pathological condition—the "Don Julián Syndrome," after the Goth who opened Spain's doors to the Muslims. The Don Julián Syndrome appears when one of us concludes that our historical enemies are, in fact, the "good guys" and Spain is, in essence, the "bad guy." Those afflicted evince an irresistible sympathy toward anything and everything that systematically infects us, whether it be the old "Black Legend of Spain" or the Eternal Moor. Zapatero's politics have given the state's blessing to all those who have that disorder.

This mind-set has every potential to take root in other societies—wherever the people do not know who they are and where they are going. It is the instinct to surrender to the barbarian, a phenomenon observed in all historical instances of decay; today, it is spreading throughout Europe. This instinct first arises in the privileged classes and may be described as an inclination to back down in the face of an external threat. Here, the fear of losing what one possesses enters into the equation, as does a certain kind of guilty conscience, a disquieting feeling of having benefited from some injustice. Thus, frequently, we hear cries that "They're not so bad," or "Aren't we the ones who pose the real threat?" At this point, the only thing left to do is to throw open the gates. <>



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Under the Black Flag

by Taki Theodoracopoulos

Before the Cacophony

Can anyone today imagine a clarinetist as a superstar the size of, say, Mick Jagger? Or God forbid, the ghostly Madonna? Well, 60 years or so ago, the biggest star in Hollywood, as well as the biggest stud, was Artie Shaw, whose combination of good looks, extraordinary musical talent, and great intelligence made him the brightest star among the dumb (not all) celluloid ones under the California sky.

Why have very few of you ever heard of him? That's an easy one to answer. Most of you are young and think that the Rolling Stones and the Beatles are as old as Beethoven, if not quite as deaf. No, the reason Artie is unknown is because he quit the music business in the mid-50's, during his prime, retired, and stayed retired until his death at 94 four years ago. He gave up the clarinet in order to write books—a book, rather—and he wrote that book until the end, 10,000 chapters or so. It was, unsurprisingly, never published. Many of his articles about jazz, or the state of jazz, were, as were his articles about the state of the human condition. (Curmudgeonly, to say the least.)

He was born Arthur Jacob Arshawsky, the son of Jewish immigrants, and married eight times. Among his wives—and check this—were Ava Gardner, the smoldering beauty from the deep South that drove men mad, certainly yours truly; Lana Turner, the blonde that went through men like a hot knife through butter; Kathleen Winsor, the novelist (*Forever Amber*), who was more beautiful than her heroines and twice as sexy; Evelyn Keyes, Scarlett O'Hara's younger sister in *Gone With the Wind*; and four other beauties that Hugh Hefner would give away his equity in Playboy Corporation to possess. Oh yes, I almost forgot. He left Betty Grable at the altar for Lana Turner, a big mistake as far as I'm concerned, because for me Betty was the most deliciously wholesome as well as sexy movie star in America, when America still repre-

sented everything everyone desired. It was said at the time that she never got over it. Well, it sounds good, but get over it she did when she married Harry James, the great trumpeter, but she did stay loyal to the artist by marrying a man who played music almost as sweet as Artie's.

So much for Artie Shaw as Don Giovanni. Ava, Lana, Betty, Kathleen, Evelyn, and hundreds of others. Let ugly feminists rail against Lotharios. A Lothario is simply a man women say yes to. And a woman who says yes to every man is—well, we all know the answer to that one. Famous beauties may have added to Shaw's mystique, but it was raw talent that lay behind the myth. And he let it all go with a short note to Duke Ellington in 1955:

There is too much dishonesty, lack of dignity, and cheap compromises of every possible sort . . . a business bristling with names built solely on willingness to cater to cheapness, shoddiness and ignorance on mass tastes. I congratulate you, Duke, for functioning with integrity.

Now there was an honest man.

When Shaw retired he walked away from \$60,000 per week, a colossal sum in those days, days in which his band was number one in the United States. Talk about style, and then some. Artie Shaw was the greatest clarinetist of all time. He concluded all his concerts by hitting a cosmic high with his C at the end of his own creation, "Concerto for Clarinet." Here are some of his greatest hits: "Begin the Beguine," "Frenesi," "Star Dust," and hundreds of other recordings I was lucky to hear time and again while growing up. A friend was a fan. Shaw hired Billie Holiday, Roy Eldridge, Oran "Hot Lips" Page, Hank Jones, Tommy Potter, Mel Tormé, Billie Butterfield, Max Kaminsky, and Buddy Rich. He volunteered for the U.S. Navy



in World War II, served and performed under fire in the Pacific, and collected over 15,000 books. His great rival, Benny Goodman, was not a nice man, and in a band niceness and human relations count a lot. Duke Ellington's clarinetist Barney Bigard called Artie "simply the best," as did others in his field. He lived incognito the last 30 years of his life in Los Angeles but kept busy, spending his days investigating the possibilities of language. He was my idol when I was a very young man because of his music and his women, not necessarily in that order. I associate him with every young girl I danced with or kissed to his music. Now I love him for having walked away, Achilles-like, but unlike my fellow Greek, never making a comeback.

And he knew what he was doing. Rock music is the single most blatant stigma of the death of civilization, and Artie Shaw saw it coming before anyone else. In Dante's *Inferno*, deceivers are dispatched to the eighth circle of Hell enduring cruel enough punishment, but traitors are sent to the ninth, for even greater torment. Modern cacophony—I refuse to call it music—and those who have enriched themselves by it are both deceivers and traitors. Alas, 300 million morons in the United States alone, and hundreds of millions elsewhere, go weak at the knees at the sight of odious, untalented, ugly, hirsute, cacophonous so-called rock stars, as bitter an irony as the fact that Mozart died broke. Artie Shaw, a very good-looking man with great knowledge and even greater curiosity, decided to opt out at the top. Let's call him the Cincinnatus of sweet music. <

La Plus Belle France

by Catharine Savage Brosman

*"If I were God and had two sons, the eldest would have to be God after me,
but I'd make the second King of France."*

—Ascribed to Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor

The Discovery of France

by Graham Robb

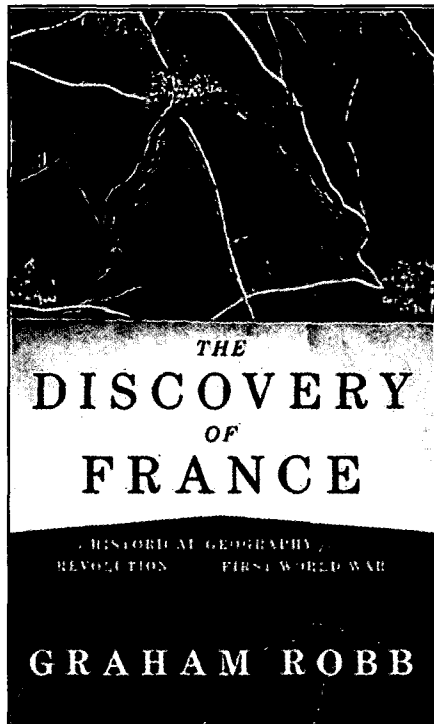
New York: Norton; 457 pp., \$27.95



The subtitle of this handsome illustrated volume, "A Historical Geography From the Revolution to the First World War," usefully indicates the book's historical dimension, which the title alone does not convey. While a quick glance at the work suggests more of its scope, only careful reading can reveal its enormous variety and interest of topics, wealth of detail, and stylistic liveliness.

Robb, an historian living in Oxford, has written previously on 19th-century French subjects, notably in biographies of Balzac, Victor Hugo, and Rimbaud, and his knowledge of the period must have been solid. The present work resulted from his determination to increase his personal acquaintance with France by bicycling through it—a journey, he writes, of 14,000 miles in the saddle. To create this book, his impressive odyssey was complemented by four years in libraries. The efforts were not misplaced.

Conceived as an historical guidebook, the volume is not a narrative of Robb's own travels, nor even orga-



nized as an armchair tour of France, though, as he notes, it does identify locations of unusual interest. While the orientation is toward the past, the present is not neglected; he surveys, for instance, the current status of numerous groups, sites, trades, languages, and traditions examined first in an historical context. Even readers who know France well in one or more ways will make discoveries in these pages.

Robb's investigation shares certain principles with those of the school of historiography centered around the journal *Annales: Sociétés, Économies, Civilisations*, founded in 1929. Illustrated most famously by Fernand Braudel, the *Annales* approach emphasized *longue durée* and almost timeless, or slowly changing, social and historical features, sometimes geographical

ones—in contradistinction to histories concentrating on major figures, regimes, wars, and other events and the changes they brought about (a viewpoint seen by many 20th-century historians as reductionist and elitist). Asking different questions and putting aside the standard sorts of documentation used in political and military history, *Annales* historians and similarly minded researchers drew on other sources of information, usually at the micro level, such as village and church archives, additional lists and inventories, and personal records of ordinary (if literate) people. The long-duration approach thus came to involve what has been called the "worm's eye view" of history. They adopted as well somewhat different expository modes. While their approach has its own limitations, it can offer a large number of perspectives, and this multiplication of complementary vantage points, even modest ones, remedies partially the quasi-impossibility, to which contemporary philosophers and historians are particularly sensitive, of seeing the whole, broadly.

In the same spirit, Robb forgoes the features of standard political histories as well as traditional geographic surveys. His concern is with France as it was known and experienced by those who found themselves in her territory—natives, migrants, visitors—from the mid-18th century (in

Catharine Savage Brosman is poetry editor for *Chronicles*.

fact, a bit before his *terminus a quo*, the 1789 revolution) to the early 20th, and what this experience reveals about the land and the evolving nation as a cultural, ethnological, and historical entity. In other words, what were things like, in Provence, in the Béarn, in Brittany, along the Rhône, in the Massif Central? He draws on recent historical monographs, but particularly on obscure sources, contemporary with the period studied, some anonymous, a few produced by the government; he also adds the fruit of his own observations and interviews. Quite rightly, he emphasizes the multiple *pays* of France, not the *pays* as nation but rather its discrete components—the regions, often very narrowly defined, that were seen by natives, before centralization and erosion of cultural distinctions, as “home” in opposition to all the rest.

The study is flexibly, though not capriciously, organized; its basic arrangement is topical, but the exposition proceeds now chronologically, now geographically, now in a blend of the two modes, moving gradually toward the early 1900's. This flexible organization allows for wide-ranging considerations, numerous digressions, and pertinent supporting examples and statistics. (Robb relishes facts and provides innumerable curious and enlightening ones. For instance, as late as 1863 a quarter of all army recruits were said to speak semi-incomprehensible *patois*, or dialects. And in 1843, when Victor Hugo, on holiday, stopping in Rochefort, an Atlantic port, learned from a newspaper that his beloved daughter Léopoldine had drowned in the Seine, it took him 74 hours to reach Paris.)

The author initiates his study by considering France as being until the late 19th century (part of) an “undiscovered continent,” ill known, where most of the population was invisible—not just rural but hidden away, whether by forests, narrow valleys, moors, nearly inaccessible mountains, or fear or xenophobia (its or others’). Robb then looks at the “tribes of France”—ethnologically and culturally—in

the period under review, as they can be known now, and the multitude of languages spoken then and, in some places, still today. It is clear that the contemporary French should feel no need to look elsewhere for cultural and tribal diversity; the nation was never homogeneous in terms of racial makeup and traditions, not even in religion. Only in the 19th and early 20th centuries were regimes sufficiently powerful and concerned with national unity—through centralizing impulse and self-aggrandizement, and as means to other ends—to attempt to impose homogeneity. In this attempt, they succeeded to varying degrees and *via* assorted means and policies—education, language laws, economic policies, cruel repression—and thanks to modern means of transportation and communication, and war. In recent decades the earlier distinct identities have come to be valued, and the French have spent enormous sums and exerted great effort to try to decentralize authority and institutions (museums, for instance) and restore local tongues and traditions.

Following the introductory chapters that set forth these considerations, two subsequent chapters deal with “Living in France”—the basic economics of life for most people at the time, their shelter, means of subsistence, mores, attitudes toward death, and other matters. Differences among regions, provinces, and even from village to village are emphasized, as well as isolation; many villagers rarely left home, going at the most a very few miles. (Even at that, 18th-century travelers, as historian Arlette Farge has shown, sometimes carried little memoranda in the form of parchment “bracelets” indicating vital facts in case they died elsewhere.) Robb also examines religious phenomena, notably the persistence of pagan beliefs, then surveys the experiences of travel on foot, or by horse, mule, or coach. Insofar as facts permit, an enlightening—and enlightened—chapter looks at the 60 million domestic animals (according to the 1866 census), their treatment, and the uses to which they were put.

Other topics receiving attention

are the phenomena of migration and displaced workers and the centripetal forces that drove peasants and tradesmen to Paris; the cultural gulf between Paris and the provinces; the development of small-scale industry; “the wonders of France” and various natural features (escarpments, canyons) long hidden from most or all eyes; roads and road construction; attitudes of 19th-century French travelers (or “tourists”) toward those in different regions (the “natives”); and—one of the most interesting topics—18th-century cartography and the devising of the meter. Readers who take note of the great cycling competition in the Hexagon (as continental France is sometimes known) will be attracted to the chapter titled “Journey to the Centre of France,” which deals with early bicycling, grueling races, and the successful promotion of the inaugural Tour de France (1903), begun as a publicity stunt.

As befits his ethnological interest and particular historical approach, the author stresses the condition of groups living at the margin throughout the period in question. In his brief Epilogue, he likens the status of Muslims in the suburbs north of present-day Paris, often spoken of as “scum,” to that of earlier low-caste groups (provincials, 19th-century Paris slum-dwellers, and foreigners) and notes the willful blindness of most French to persecution, *de jure* or *de facto*, present and past. What some observers would view as the particular problems posed now by the huge numbers of Muslims in the country are not acknowledged; it could be asserted, doubtless, that all underclass and foreign elements have posed particular problems.

Despite the broad range of this investigation, with its inevitable generalities, and the attention paid to peoples and obscure figures in their peculiar settings, individuals stand out also—the Cassini family of cartographers, for instance, and Mme. de Genlis, author of a French-German phrase book for travelers. It will be noted how frequently Robb draws on information from well-known figures—scientists, and especially major 19th-century au-

thors. Stendhal and Victor Hugo were travelers, and observant ones, who wrote up their experiences; Balzac, another source, knew well both Parisian and provincial mores; George Sand and Flaubert depicted their respective regions with great attention to detail and, it seems, accuracy; Mérimée, as the new inspector general of national monuments, traveled very widely and reported on what he saw. (R.L. Stevenson is another source of information on traveling in 19th-century France.) To call on Stendhal, Mérimée, Balzac, and others is appropriate. France was certainly a land of *les petites gens*—anonymous villagers, peasants, tradesmen, industrial workers after industry finally got established—and it is they, situated in their territories, whom Robb is most desirous of evoking; but France was also, and remains, a nation of great philosophers, scientists, and writers, who can be considered the mind, as well as the chief eyes, ears, and voice, of France as we know her.

The author should be commended for providing, as an aid to readers, occasional references in the text to topics and names treated more extensively elsewhere. A useful chronology, copious notes, a list of works cited, a general index, and a geographic index (which by itself indicates the wide scope of the study) complete the volume. There are black-and-white maps and 25 glossy illustrations, some reproductions of very old photographs depicting unusual scenes, and a dozen or so in color. No matter how artificially arranged the scene is, the native colored image of Strasbourg, taken from a children's book called *Le Tour de France* (1893), with its church spire, narrow streets, and children in Alsatian costume, is moving, 138 years after the "lost provinces" were seized by the Prussians, some 90 years after they were regained. Such sentimentality is not required, however, for a reader to take delight in this book, whose length should not deter buyers but attract them. Robb has fulfilled the classical ideal of *belles-lettres* by writing a work that pleases and instructs at the same time. <>

Desperado

by James O. Tate

Mexico Way

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.
Rockford, IL: Chronicles Press;
130 pp., \$18.95



The Western setting of this closely focused narrative is a confirmation of the author's identification with a region, as we know from his Western novels *Desert Light* and *The Homestead* and other nonfictional books relating to the West and to the border with Mexico. The text itself, however, insists that this Western setting is more than the ground of the action, or perhaps we should say that the realization of this "more," the sense of natural abundance and mystery, is the action itself.

As we first encounter Samuel Adams White, inspector with the United States Customs Bureau, his wife is telling him that he is the most boring person she has ever known and that she wants a divorce. That she might have a point here for some reason or other is not a matter that the inspector of customs inspects, perhaps because he is unaccustomed to introspection.

Disoriented, he hesitates about his next step. He wonders where he is going to live, but he finds out the hard way that this is not really the question before him. Rather, he will have to deal with the question of whether he will live at all, and if so, as seems unlikely, of how he is going to live. The inspector Samuel Adams White will have to take a good look at a lot of things, though that is difficult to do when he is bound and gagged and stuffed in a bag and abducted by criminals and is also having some trouble controlling his excretory functions when there is no provision made for their relief.

What next? The inspector has no idea, though it does enter his mind later that the rogues who have him in their power have a grievance against

him. He doesn't quite comprehend his own culpability, but even if he did, such considerations are swept aside by the rush of events. And when I say "rush," I mean rush.

The inspector has hit a nadir, and the point of such a rock bottom of despair and desperation is that it is the ground of recovery. The logic of Kierkegaard and the paradoxes of Dostoyevsky come to mind. Flannery O'Connor's character The Misfit might have said of the inspector that he would have been a good man if there had been somebody there to abduct him every day of his life.

Now if I have begun these remarks about this Western tale with remarks about Westerns or books about the West, then I must also insist that the text itself is, unlike the inspector, quite self-aware. When the inspector buys some new clothes, we can see that he is playing with clichés that we know from many years of exploitation. "[H]e purchased blue jeans, three candy-striped shirts with yoked shoulders and pearly snap-buttons, a canvas duster . . ." and so on. But his new life cannot be so easily acquired after all, and such decorations, the false image of a life he is not yet living, are stripped away.

In a related vein, he remembers something about Western romances, the cultural inheritance we associate with paperbacks and movies.

He read the works of Zane Grey, Jack Schaefer, and Walter van Tilburg Clark, but Louis L'Amour's were his particular favorites. In these books the inspector recognized the America his father, a San Diego police officer, had taught him in his boyhood and in which he'd lost neither faith nor belief since: an America that won its battles, solved its problems, brought enlightenment and progress to the world, and had God on its side.

The ambiguity of the discourse is what distinguishes literature from word processing, and the unwinding of the presentation is through an *askesis*, a

suffering, even a ritual humiliation or ordeal that is a necessary introduction to the reality of nature, so that an approach may be made through the human to the supernatural.

Yes, the inspector has a lot to learn. A toy poodle named Darlene is not, after all, protection in the wilderness, and water would have been useful, even welcome, in the desert. But what the inspector learns transcends physical survival, and as he experiences a transformation from death to life, the reader, compelled to follow, is rewarded for the journey. Following the protagonist, the reader is conducted through a series of reversals that constitute a triumph of formal mastery and symbolic extension as the customs inspector is last seen as a smuggler himself, as is necessary.

So I think the point here is not so much Louis L'Amour as it is *The Waste Land* and the larger resonances of medieval romance and mythology. A fortune-teller and the desert do strike some Eliotic overtones as this narrative reaches out of its mode of crisis and adventure to mount a spiritual vision and frame a moral fable. The sense at the end is that such a vision has been earned in the only possible way, and it has been powerfully imparted. So I have come away from Chilton Williamson's book with a sense of the Western mode not only as medieval and Mexican, but also as Wagnerian or even Spenglerian. The Dimming of the Gods and the Undergoing of the Evening Lands is written into the face of nature and implies not an end but an unfolding that we see geologically and astronomically as well, if only we can see what we behold—or inspect.

Having the impudence to believe that writers want what readers want, and that what readers want is to have their lapels grabbed by the genteel mugging of narrative command, then I have to say that the three readers of *Mexico Way* whom I know have all testified to gratifyingly mussed lapels. Those three readers were not, as it happens, Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, and Ernest Hemingway, but they might as well have been. And

such a consideration leads me to certain predictions. One is that *Mexico Way* is going to continue to give readers what they can't get in any other way. Such readers talk, and the word will spread. Second prediction: As a model of composition, of subtle simplicity, and of the control of diction and point of view, *Mexico Way* will be the object of study in creative-writing classes. And third: As the basis of a screenplay, *Mexico Way* is going to be a remarkable film, though noticing its cinematic possibilities is in no sense any neglect of its inherent achievement. As it is, this Western novel, Western in more than one sense, is the best fiction I have read in years.

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.

The Burden of History

by Thomas Fleming

The Hellenistic Age:
A Short History

by Peter Green
New York: Modern Library;
199 pp., \$21.95



Peter Green is one of the rarest birds in the academic chicken coop, a popular historian who combines careful scholarship and original opinions into a coherent account that respects its sources and yet attempts to go beyond them. In a long career he has achieved considerable renown for such varied books as a translation of Juvenal's *Satires*, historical novels, and several important studies of what he calls *The Greco-Persian Wars*. His *Alexander to Actium* (1993) bucked the current tide of historical research, which refuses to regard the postclassical Greek world as a decline from the "Golden Age" of the fifth and early fourth centuries. *The Hellenistic Age*, a

work aimed at common readers rather than at specialists, represents only a minor revision of the earlier work, though he was able to take advantage of a large body of scholarship that has been ground out in the 17 years that have intervened.

The Hellenistic Age is hard to grapple with. The term itself is modern: J.G. Droysen coined it (in the late 19th century) to identify a period that, as Green describes it, begins with "the shattering impact of Alexander's conquest of the Persian Achaemenid empire," continues through "the power struggle engendered among Alexander's marshals by his premature death, and then of the several dynasties founded by the victors (the so-called Diadochoi, or Successors) in that struggle, most notably Ptolemy in Egypt and Seleucus in Asia," and concludes with "Octavian's victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BCE." (Note the anti-Christian method of dating now *de rigueur* in the free-thinking academy.)

Historians of the Archaic and Classical Ages have created the comfortable illusion that one can know Greece of the sixth and fifth centuries by studying the histories of Sparta and Athens or, more commonly, of Athens alone, though until the Persian Wars Athens was something of a jerkwater town in the sticks compared with either the great Ionian cities of Asia Minor and the islands or with wealthy Corinth. Unfortunately, no such simplification is possible in a Hellenistic Greece that covers the entire eastern Mediterranean and whose influence extends as far as Persia and India. It is not a simple story to tell, but Green has done as good a job as anyone can expect, short of a series of separate volumes on Macedonia, Asia, and Egypt. The common reader without much previous experience in the period will not find it difficult to follow the twists and turns of the narrative, though his recollection will be buttressed by a second reading.

Hellenistic Greece begins with Alexander the Great, but historians still debate the extent of Alexander's personal influence. Green throws a large bucket of cold water on schol-

ars who have represented Alexander as a conscious apostle of Hellenism out to avenge the subjugation of Ionia and two invasions of Greece or a visionary conqueror with a plan for a New World Order. Alexander was no Augustus or even Napoleon, but only a brilliant thug who would have never run out of places to loot if death had not mercifully intervened. The world that surfaced in the wake of his rampage was not even anticipated by a king who did not bother to arrange an orderly succession. Asked on his deathbed to whom his empire would pass, he could only reply (quite accurately), "to the strongest." Oddly for the Macedonians (and for Green), the most enduring legacy of Alexander's adventures was the spread of Hellenism throughout western Asia, a cultural transformation that facilitated the rapid diffusion of Christianity.

Though far from being an apologist for "the glory that was Greece" in the fifth century, Green pays attention to the judgments of Hellenistic writers, who almost to a man believed they were living in the shadow of greater men. As Arnold Toynbee, in one of his later books, was able to show, Greeks of every age have tended to look back to the greatness of earlier times, whether to the Homeric Age, the classical period, or the Byzantine Empire.

The classical period was violent, and the violence reached a crescendo during the Peloponnesian Wars, but even Greeks accustomed to interstate and intertribal violence must have viewed with horror the wars undertaken by the Successors for no nobler motives than loot, particularly the loot of the human capital sold in the great slave markets. The brutish aggression of Hellenistic rulers might well have encouraged many Greeks, as Green suggests, to accept Roman rule as the lesser of two evils, though all too many Roman commanders imitated the example of their Hellenistic predecessors by killing and enslaving vast numbers and looting the helpless cities of their art treasures. Green cannot avoid the comparison with Goering. Hardly an admirer of

the Roman order, Green justly pays tribute to Octavian, whose

victory brought an end not only to Greco-Macedonian independence, but also to the interne-cine struggles of the Roman civil wars. His imposition of the pax Augusta led grateful survivors to regard him, in true Hellenistic style, as a god. He curbed private extortions, regularized relations between cities and proconsular authorities, and built on the huge expansion of horizons, the internationalizing of trade and culture that Alexander, all unintentionally, had created.

The Hellenistic Age, in many respects, represents a fairly abrupt transition from the earlier system of independent *poleis* to a cosmopolitan world of great cities in which Greeks of every stripe rubbed shoulders with Egyptians, Syrians, and Jews, Italians, Celts, and Carthaginians. But one cannot ignore the countervailing reactionary tendency that retained local pieties and rejected democracy in favor of aristocratic stability. Green does justice to both tendencies.

All in all, Green's little book is a splendid accomplishment, though one occasionally marred by a fondness for antiquated slang and academic jargon that is a telltale sign of a writer who in his day was always "with it." Evidence too often comes in "tantalizing" bits; a royal wedding is "much-publicized" (did the Macedonians, I wonder, hire p.r. agents?); a report on Alexander is "stage-managed" by Demosthenes. His occasional indulgence in slang and clichés is at first only irritating, but some of them suggest a tendency toward reducing ancient culture to the comfortable dimensions of the world we live in. The Persian Empire's habit of hoarding precious metals is more than once compared with Fort Knox, apparently as a slap against American capitalism. The spread of Alexander's coins as a uniform currency becomes a monetary union, when in fact it reflected nothing extraordinary: From the invention of coinage, rulers

who put their faces on coins have insisted on making their coins the common currency of their realm. Christians know this from Christ's famous admonition to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

Green pushes economic determinism perhaps further than it can be made to go with the sources available, and his well-worn argument that Greeks did not make advances in economic theory because of their contempt for commerce is an unjustifiable speculation based on the assumption that ancient men acted out of the same economically rational motives as we moderns do. But this is the very point of view that the great Marxian historian, Sir Moses Finley, combated effectively in his Sather Lectures on the ancient economy.

One may agree to disagree on economic theory, but Green is relentlessly ethnocentric (the *ethnos* being modern post-Christian man). Macedonians and Greeks are not only "racists" but "unabashed racists." Is this only a stylistic reflex of a weary writer on an off day or an indication of something deeper? Human tribes have almost always preferred their own kind to others, and many Greeks (though not Herodotus) were quite as bigoted as the ancient Jews, but racism as an ideology is a 19th-century development that can only be applied by analogy to the ancient world. To describe their natural prejudices as "racism" would be like describing infant exposure as "pro-choice" or homosexuality as an expression of "gay rights."

More troubling than the noun *racism* is the accompanying adjective *unabashed*. Is it really the historian's job to tut-tut the point of view of his subjects or expect ancient pagans, affected neither by Christianity nor by post-Christian sentimentalism, to feel ashamed of what they felt? Green's bad habit of seeking easy parallels can be seen in the answer to an interviewer's question, "Are there issues today that a knowledge of the classics would help us solve?"

Almost anything to do with politics! So much else changes, but

the psychology of power, never. You want to understand OPEC? Look at the Sicilian Expedition. The Colonels? Peisistratos wrote the blueprint. Orwellian doublespeak? Try civil war on Coreyra. This is why (if you discount the topical jokes) Aristophanes is so astonishingly modern-sounding.

Peter Green is no more a prisoner of his age than other historians are; in fact, he is more free of cant than most ancient historians who continue to celebrate Cleisthenes and Pericles as selfless liberals rather than as power-seeking promoters of their family and clan interests—not a mistake Green has made. Among his great strengths are his courage in taking unfashionable positions and his candor in expressing them. The very openness of Green in venting his opinions gives readers the opportunity to demur. In an academic profession divided between meticulous drudges and flashy con artists with new paradigms to hawk, Green—bias and all—is a treasure.

Thomas Fleming is the editor of Chronicles and the author of Socialism.

Get Big and Get Out!

by Clark Stooksbury

The End of Food
by Paul Roberts
Boston: Houghton Mifflin;
390 pp., \$26.00



Many news stories from the first half of 2008 read like a page out of the Book of Revelation. Rising grain prices were already leading to food riots in developing countries when a one-two punch, in the form of Cyclone Nargis and a series of tornadoes and floods, devastated the rice

crop in Burma and corn production in the Midwest. When food wasn't too expensive, it frequently made people ill, such as in the salmonella outbreak that sickened customers and caused restaurants and grocers to dispose of several varieties of tomatoes in more than a dozen states, although the cause of the outbreak has yet to be determined.

Paul Roberts, with *The End of Food*, is here to tell the eating public that the problem isn't as bad as the media make it seem—it is, in reality, much worse. The book is a searing indictment not only of the dominant methods of food production, but, implicitly, of the political and media culture, which does a great job of reporting on flag pins and flip-flops but drops the ball when it comes to serious issues.

American agriculture has for decades been geared toward producing large quantities of commodities at low prices. Roberts quotes the two secretaries of agriculture who most explicitly articulated the guiding philosophy of American agricultural policy in the post-World War II era—Ezra Taft Benson (“get big or get out”) and Earl Butz (plant corn from “fence row to fence row”). Prices in the grocery store have been kept low by government subsidies and by the ability of powerful agribusiness interests to avoid paying for the externalities that they create.

In recent decades, animal husbandry evolved from the bucolic image of a farm with a henhouse and cows in a pasture to what is called a CAFO, or Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation. Cramming a large number of livestock into a CAFO results in increased economies of scale, and thus lower costs. But Roberts describes numerous negative side effects, including the “protein-starved chickens [who] turned cannibalistic, eating one another’s feathers . . . until farmers began supplementing grain with protein-rich soybeans and amino acids.” In addition to promoting cannibalism, raising animals in close quarters makes the spread of disease a serious problem, which CAFO farms address by drugging animals with antibiot-

ics. Agriculture consumes half of the antibiotics that the world produces. These are used for controlling disease and promoting growth among livestock. An unintended consequence of drugging animals on this scale is that “livestock and poultry producers must constantly upgrade to different antibiotics—a demand curve that even some pharmaceutical companies aren’t sure how long they can meet.” If they fail to do so, humans as well as animals will pay a price in deaths by infections.

The most obvious externality of the CAFO comes in the form of animal waste. Roberts uses the quaint euphemism “poop lagoon” to describe this side effect of high-density feedlots. In more traditional forms of agriculture, manure was an asset, not a waste product. (I remember my grandmother having a large pile of it in her yard for her rose bushes.) But since industrial animal production commonly takes place at a distance from the industrial farm, this is no longer the case. These “poop lagoons” threaten air and water quality, and their concentrated nitrogen content disrupts ecosystems even when they remain intact—and they don’t always remain intact. A North Carolina lagoon collapse in 1995 did great damage to nearby crops and killed aquatic life in a 17-mile stretch of the New River.

The flipside of the waste problem may be seen in the chemical fertilizers that fueled the explosion of agricultural productivity in the years after World War II. After decades of enormous growth produced by the use of chemical fertilizers, yields are no longer advancing at the rate of a few years ago, nor even keeping pace with rising demand. This is occurring in part because “plant breeders . . . are running into the law of diminishing returns, in the plants themselves.” Also, soil becomes degraded and eroded by the intensive methods accompanying chemical fertilizer use. And since it is a product of natural gas, the cost of chemical fertilizer is affected by tightening energy supplies.

The thirty-three thousand cubic feet of natural gas needed

to make a ton of nitrogen fertilizer could be used instead to generate 9671 kilowatts of electricity . . . [F]ertilizer companies . . . are now directly competing for natural gas with utility companies . . . and losing.

Another serious problem associated with nitrogen is the effect it has after it has caused crop growth. Running off into lakes, rivers, and oceans, it kills most of the life there.

In rivers and lakes, this wayward nitrogen essentially fertilizes whatever is in its path, such as milfoil, which clogs waterways, and various algae, which coat rocks, beaches, and piers in green muck. Worse, when these organisms die, they set off a chain reaction known as eutrophication, which sucks the oxygen from ponds and lakes and creates massive fish-killing dead zones. According to a 2003 report by the United Nations Environment Program, the number of dead zones worldwide is nearly one hundred and fifty.

The final resting place for much of the runoff from Midwestern agribusiness operations is in a Massachusetts-sized dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, produced by deposits from the Mississippi River.

Recent economic and environmental developments have conspired to make Roberts appear prescient, though at times even he can seem excessively optimistic. Writing about oil prices, a critical factor in the cost of food, Roberts predicts that they may hold in the \$90 range for the next several years. Roberts also speculates that the corn belt could suffer from a climate-change-induced "succession of droughts, rainstorms, and widespread floods . . ." Reports from the spring of 2008 told of the toll that excessive rain was having on corn planting—right before the aforementioned epic flood hit the Midwest, with massive damage to the corn crop. Other weather phenomena that have restricted the glob-

al food supply include a drought in Australia, which has adversely affected wheat production.

After devoting hundreds of pages to exposing the direct and indirect subsidies that distort the market for food, Roberts erroneously attributes the "transformation of the food system" to "one of the most powerful and brutally efficient of all human forces—the market." In fact, the system by which Americans obtain their foodstuffs has been heavily shaped by government policies, from agricultural subsidies to the Interstate Highway System to the neglect of border security. Of course the market plays a role in conditioning Americans always to demand more, primarily in the form of advertising, as well as by exploiting the guilt and anxieties of working mothers. The food industry, notes Roberts, cannot afford to have Americans eat less, else it would lose billions of dollars in revenue.

In the current climate, the critical first step in addressing the looming crisis is as obvious as it is impossi-

ble: to eliminate farm subsidies and force agribusiness to pay for the environmental damage it creates. Yet a change of mind on the part of the public is more important than any specific policy change could possibly be, as consumers have been lulled by decades of public and corporate policy geared to instilling ever-increasing expectations.

Irrespective of the effect this has on our collective cultural and physical health, the evidence suggests that it is not sustainable. Economist Herbert Stein once formulated the axiom "If something cannot go on forever, it will stop." American and world agriculture, as described by Paul Roberts, meets the definition of a process that cannot go on forever. The evidence suggests that most people will not be prepared when this one finally does grind to a halt, and grocery aisles are no longer filled with an abundance of cheap food.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.

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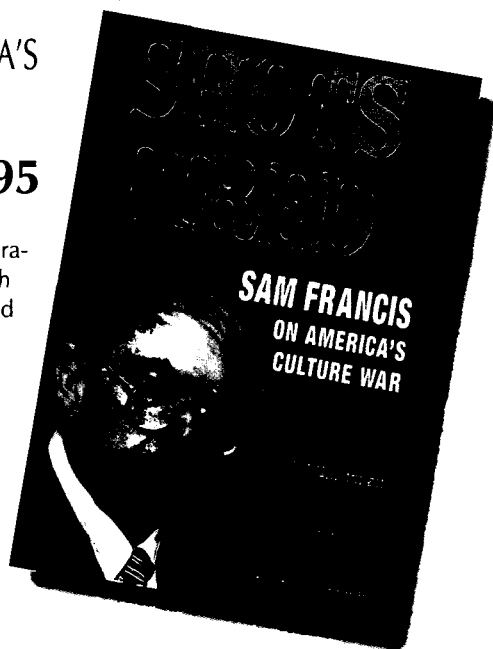
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Election Hangover

Your Excellency,

I don't know about you, but I am ready for this campaign season to be as dead as Scrooge's doornail. For the last month, political commercials have crowded television screens and websites, interrupting even Mayberry reruns and the latest scoop on Paris Hilton. Despite their promises to avoid negative campaigns, all candidates have by now thoroughly execrated one another. (Positive campaigning would put everyone to sleep, including the candidates. For entertainment purposes, give me the candidate who goes for the jugular instead of the mind any day of the week.)

The conclusion of past elections has usually induced sighs of relief among voters eager to recommence their lives. This election, however, presents some particular difficulties. If the Democrats lose the presidential race, some political observers predict that all hell will break loose, that blacks will riot in the streets, and that feminists who long ago burned their bras will kick down the barn doors and burn anything wearing a penis. If the Republicans lose the election, other pundits fear that battalions of despairing evangelicals may turn for solace to alcohol and loose women, costing our country billions in lost work hours and thereby increasing our national deficit.

These possibilities present the Church with a unique opportunity.

Several million fervent Democrats suffer from Palin Derangement Syndrome (PDS). Roger Kimball first described this disease in his essay "The Kael Syndrome Returns: Why Democrats are in for a Big Surprise Come November." Kimball recommends reading Lyle Rossiter's *The Liberal Mind: The Psychological Causes of Political Madness*. "In his determination to control the world," writes Rossiter, the liberal

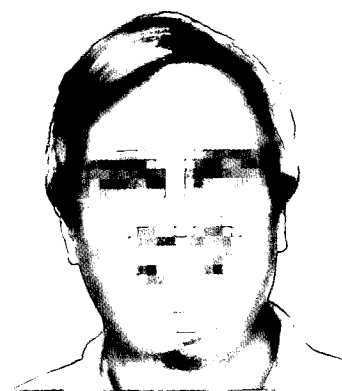
constantly defends himself
against what Karen Horney apt-

ly described as the most basic of human factors: being alone and helpless in a dangerous, indifferent world, the nightmare of the abandoned terrified child.

If the Democrats lose, many of those afflicted by PDS will feel even more alone and helpless than they normally do, and will doubtless require counseling. Here is where Holy Mother Church in her great compassion might prove invaluable. We should open our parish halls and offer solace to those poor souls who voted for The Prophet and The Plagiarist. Teams of counselors might man the tables, ready with advice, boxes of Kleenex, fair-trade coffee, and organic bran muffins to restore these "abandoned, terrified children" to the world. This therapy may prove expensive—I priced those muffins at EarthFare this morning, and they ain't cheap—but such a show of compassion will certainly gain converts to our Faith.

And what if the McCain-Palin fighter jet nosedives onto the beach? To their followers we must tender a different sort of compassion. Instead of tissues and soothing words, we'll offer the defeated Republicans a Happy Hour—martinis, wine, hors d'oeuvres—followed by a supper of moose stew. The Church could make priests available to hear the confessions of those who took the Lord's name in vain when the election results rolled across their television screens. (I advise sending our liberal priests on a two-week vacation. Some parishioners may decide that Father's advocacy of immigration and higher taxes deserves its own small riot.)

As for me, Your Excellency, all will be well. I have few illusions regarding the diminished grandeur of our republic. What does interest me, however, is how you and your fellow bishops will react, should the Democrats take the White House, to a Catholic



vice president who has so staunchly advocated abortion. Do the faithful idly watch for four years while our pro-abortion vice president weekly receives Holy Communion? Should the thousands of pro-life marchers sit silently each January while cardinals and archbishops, bishops and priests, file into Washington's Basilica of the Immaculate Conception to preach against abortion even as smug Joe Biden wallows in mortal sin? If you bishops turn a blind eye to Pro-Abort Joe, does this mean that we sinners in the pews can also expect leniency? Some assurance here would comfort me, as I sometimes drink too much, indulge in gossip, and occasionally look at women half my age with "lust in my heart." (Oh, how innocent the Jimmy Carter of 1976 seems now.) If you could extend to me the same blindness that the Church offers Jo-Jo, you would spare me the dual burdens of lost time and self-humiliation currently associated with my confessions.

Finally, I see that you and your brother bishops are to gather six days after the election to discuss how to handle politicians who promote abortion. How convenient that you will wait to deliberate this matter of killing babies until after the ballots have been cast. This course allows you to encourage votes for the Obama ticket while appearing to extend compassion toward the unborn. Is this what is known as thinking with the Church? If so, please let me hear from you, as I am clearly not thinking hard enough.

With all good wishes for you as we enter the penitential season of Advent,

Joe Ecclesia

The Audacity of Dopes

No one expected the vote to be so close. After Sarah Palin's acceptance speech in St. Paul, the Republicans were certain they had found a rock star to compete with Barack Obama. They could ride the crest of Palinmania all the way to the Oval Office. All they had to do was keep the hockey mom out of the public eye—or, rather, the public ear. Her impromptu remarks on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—"They've gotten too big and cost the taxpayers too much"—the day before the federal government nationalized the private mortgage insurers had been embarrassing. John McCain could do the talking; Sarah Palin would do the looking—from a distance, hand cupped over her ear.

The Democrats took the Palin nomination seriously. They knew the value of a symbolic gesture; a first-term senator from Illinois would not have received their party's nomination otherwise. While Republicans were crowing over post-convention polls that showed a 20-point shift in the support of white women from Obama-Biden to McCain-Palin, the Democrats were working hard to turn back the tide.

Their first attempt—running ads in such battleground states as Ohio and Wisconsin, claiming that John McCain would make abortion illegal—fell flat. They had not fully grasped the change in demographics. White women—the group most likely to vote—may not want to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, but they are less likely today to make their decisions about a candidate based entirely on that candidate's support for abortion rights.

The radical feminism of Betty Friedan is dead, except in the upper echelons of the Democratic Party. Today, all the feminists have pretty faces, and some, like Sarah Palin, are even Feminists for Life.

Barack Obama caught on quickly, and the abortion ads disappeared. Taking a cue from his running mate,

he backtracked on his answer ("It's above my pay grade") to the question asked by megachurch pastor Rick Warren ("When is a baby entitled to human rights?") Obama reframed his support for abortion rights in terms of "humility." As Joe Biden had done on *Meet the Press*—during the primary and more recently—Obama claimed that the possibility that he might be wrong about when human life begins meant that he could not impose his view on others.

It was a classic case of "personally opposed, but"—except that there was no evidence that Obama was personally opposed, even in the slightest, even to the postpartum murder of children who managed to survive an abortion. Still, the rhetorical shift paid off, as some white women began to find their way back to the Democratic camp—a move made more easy when they caught their husbands googling "Sarah Palin bikini rifle."

When John McCain finally agreed to show up for a presidential debate, voters tuned in eagerly, assuming that the sparring match would be better than those of 2004. McCain, however, proved that he could look just as much like a deer in the headlights as George W. Bush could, and the campaign took a drop in the polls after a McCain staffer suggested that the senator's poor performance was caused by overly bright stage lights, which triggered a bout of post-traumatic stress disorder. Voters might have laughed it off, if McCain had not responded to the first question with only his name, rank, and serial number.

Still, most commentators scored it a tie and suggested that Barack Obama had made a mistake in bringing on John Kerry as a debate coach. The cameramen had some trouble getting a good angle on Obama, as the tip of his nose (already a hot topic of discussion on *The O'Reilly Factor*) had risen to be about even with his eye-



brows. And most voters were skeptical of Obama's claim to have served as an altar boy while attending a Muslim school in Indonesia. The bloggers at *Daily Kos* were the only ones who took him at his word, but the mere mention of the Catholic Church convinced them to dump Obama in favor of Socialist candidate Cynthia McKinney, whom no one had ever accused of flirting with traditional morality.

The vice presidential debates promised more drama. Would Sarah Palin unleash her inner Coulter? Or would she play the doting wife and mother, in the hope that Joe Biden's handlers would suggest that he try to drive her from the stage like a Serb fleeing Pristina? In the end, the bout was anticlimactic. Senator Biden, smiling like the Cheshire Cat, droned on endlessly, and Governor Palin kept looking nervously to the sidelines for a signal from her own handlers to interrupt. The signal never came, and one statistician later determined that Joe Biden had uttered nearly five times as many words as Sarah Palin.

In the final two weeks, the race tightened, as U.S. troops in Iraq came under renewed attack, which called into question the effectiveness of the Surge. Voters were not reassured when McCain's chief spokesman tried to claim that the senator's exasperated outburst—"Maybe we should get the *Enola Gay* out of mothballs, and just start again from scratch"—was, like his earlier parody of "Barbara Ann," merely an example of his wry humor.

The Rust Belt, which had been leaning more and more toward McCain as blue-collar workers began to worry

about an Obama administration taxing away the last little bits of their disposable income, came back into play when the Ford Motor Company unexpectedly announced that the last of its cash reserves had vanished in the Wall Street meltdown. While McCain attempted to back off of his initial reaction to the request for a Chrysler-style bailout—"Your jobs are going, and they're not coming back"—by proposing a comprehensive package of funding for retraining Ford employees to empty bedpans and take orders for milkshakes and fries, Obama cleverly endorsed the plan to save the auto industry that Mitt Romney had proposed during the primaries.

Thus, on Election Day, Obama squeaked out a win in Ohio, but it was not enough. Alaska's three electoral votes, targeted by the Democrats before McCain's surprise pick of the Alaska governor, carried the day for the Republicans.

And so, on January 20, with Sarah Palin at his right and Joe Lieberman guarding his rear, John Sidney McCain took the oath of office as the 44th President of the United States.

* * *

The acrimony of the campaign had led some pundits to speculate that President McCain would cast aside his maverick image and govern as a partisan. The Democrats, however, still controlled the Senate and the House. With that in mind, McCain devoted his Inaugural Address to "putting the country first by coming together in hope for change"—an awkward phrase, but one which commentators saw as an embrace of the best parts of Barack Obama's agenda.

What no one expected was the extent to which Obama took control of the legislative agenda during President McCain's first hundred days. Barack Obama's narrow loss had made him a natural choice for Senate Majority Leader; on the other hand, he had shown little indication in his first four years in the Senate that he had the temperament to be a legislative leader. President McCain's complete lack of any game plan for his first hundred

days, however, gave the Democrats an opening, and Obama put his court skills to work, driving to the hoop.

It helped that the Democrats did not go for the jugular. Rather than introducing a bill to restore federal funding for abortion, they resurrected the proposal to expand funding for embryonic stem-cell research, including the creation of new lines, that Senators Obama, Biden, and McCain had all voted for in 2007. It passed by a wide margin—64-33—but pro-lifers were convinced that President McCain, like his predecessor, would exercise the veto. When he signed it into law, they cried that they had been betrayed, but the President's press secretary pointed out that McCain had never renounced his support for ESCR; he had only promised to make other forms of stem-cell research a priority.

Longing to take the wind of out Hillary Clinton's sails well in advance of the 2012 primaries, Senator Obama proposed a hybrid federal-state healthcare plan, based on the FamilyCare that Gov. Rod Blagojevich had implemented in Illinois. States would be required to offer low-cost healthcare to all residents making less than \$75,000 (which covered the vast majority of families with children), but, beyond that, they were free to shape the program in any way they wished. The federal government would fund 80 percent of the cost of each state program by reviving the Nixon-era revenue sharing killed by Ronald Reagan.

Lacking his own plan, President McCain tried to recast the Obama initiative in the best possible light. States could use the funds to finance individual health-savings accounts, which would bring "personal responsibility" back into healthcare. The plan, he argued, had a certain "federalist" appeal; each state could come up with its own implementation, and, in this "laboratory of democracy," the best one would undoubtedly win out in the end.

When Ted Kennedy delivered his final speech in the Senate in support of the plan, the vote was a forgone conclusion, and President McCain signed the bill into law on the day of Senator

Kennedy's funeral.

By March, the President was holding regular meetings at the White House with Senator Obama, and Keith Olbermann and Chris Matthews, restored to their anchor positions on MSNBC, were talking about "the new spirit of bipartisanship." The rumor that Obama had agreed not to oppose McCain on any foreign-policy decisions, as long as the President considered the merits of the Democrats' domestic policies, was all but confirmed when Congress approved the bombing of Iran after Secretary of State Joe Lieberman, in a presentation to the United Nations, demonstrated conclusively that Saddam's missing WMDs were housed in Iranian nuclear facilities.

Then tragedy struck on March 15, 2009. Having accompanied Sarah Palin on her first trip to Alaska since being sworn in, President McCain, feeling out of place, decided to charter a flight out of the Ketchikan International Airport after *Air Force One* was not cleared for takeoff because of high winds and low visibility. He boarded the Piper Cub after winning a coin toss with country singer John Rich, who had provided the musical backdrop for the trip.

Witnesses said that the flight's fate was sealed when the plane swerved on the runway to avoid hitting an Indy Mogul. Neither the snow machine nor its driver was ever located. The ferry from the mainland, bringing rescue workers, could not navigate the rough waters, and it would be days before the *Whiskey & Rye* was fished out of the waters of Ketchikan Bay.

Sworn in on the steps of the statehouse in Juneau, Sarah Palin vowed that her first act as President would be to build the Bridge to Nowhere, "so that tragedies like this can be avoided." She promised as well to continue "President McCain's commitment to changing the political climate by furthering his spirit of bipartisanship."

Later that day, back in Washington, D.C., Secretary of State Lieberman called a press conference to announce that he had accepted President Palin's offer of the vice presidency. 

Letter From the Upper Midwest

by Sean Scallon

More (Local) Government



A 1992 Wisconsin law limits the revenue a school district can raise through property taxes. When operating costs exceed that limit, districts have to ask voters to make up the difference. The idea behind the law was to control skyrocketing teacher salaries and benefits by holding annual increases to 3.8 percent per year. The state would also kick in money to hold down property taxes. The unintended consequence of this scheme was rising salaries for other district employees (janitors, administrators, cooks, bus drivers), while the revenue caps never grew with the rate of inflation. At the same time, state money is allocated based on enrollment rather than need, so poorer rural and inner-city school districts that are declining in student population have lost out again.

This has meant endless referenda over the past decade. Durand, the school district I live in, had one last spring.

These referenda have become especially divisive; both sides are essentially right. The schools need money just to keep operating at current levels, especially in the wake of higher fuel, energy, and healthcare costs. Yet the taxpayers simply do not have the incomes necessary to meet such increasing costs, especially in bad economic times. In a letter to the editor in the *Durand Courier-Wedge*, a gentleman asked, in all sincerity, why the school district wasn't tightening its belt by eliminating field trips, like the one the band was planning to take, or activities such as forensics, instead of asking for more money. As you might expect, irate band members and their parents quickly responded, remind-

ing readers that the band was raising its own money to pay for the trip, and forensics-team members and others who engage in extracurricular activities added that, to participate in these programs, they pay fees. Despite the preponderance of letters in favor of the referendum, the measure still lost, the district faces a three-million-dollar shortfall, and a reform slate of candidates, dedicated to open government and cutting spending, was elected to the school board.

Across the state, where similar struggles have occurred, the stalemate has stopped the progress conservatives made in Wisconsin in recent years and now threatens to reverse it entirely. Much has to be worked out philosophically and politically before conservatives can find their way again.

People complain about "government" far too carelessly. Which government upsets them? The federal government? State government? Local government? They never really say. This confusion has finally caught up to conservatives who run for office and govern at the state and local level. A conservative can complain about big government at the federal level, waving around the Constitution and saying that the Founding Fathers never meant for Washington to be as big as it is now. Such a candidate can always argue for devolving "more power to state and local governments," but does he really mean it? Without clear principles for governing, conservatives at the state and local level usually do one of two things: Take a libertarian "all government at any level is bad" approach, which usually means slashing taxes to nothing and privatizing all government services; or pay lip service to this approach while taking conservative social positions on issues such as abortion, gun control, homosexual

marriage, and so forth to prove themselves to local activists.

Local governments and school districts derive their operating budgets from property taxes, a system that often penalizes those who cannot afford to pay, especially when home values shoot up faster than incomes. Residents are squeezed even further because Wisconsin truly is a middling state. Manufacturing and agriculture still play major roles in the state's economy. The more lucrative information and high-tech sectors barely exist here. Very few super-rich people live in Wisconsin, nor are there a lot of wealthy suburbs that can be tapped for money. Some school districts and governments do survive on monies collected from lake homes and woodland cottages, but, for the most part, they are trying to squeeze blood from a turnip, especially with an aging population living on fixed incomes.

In these circumstances, it is easy to whip up antitax fervor, and conservatives and their libertarian allies have done this on many occasions in order to win elections on the state and local level. The problem comes after taking office. If you are single-mindedly committed to cutting taxes, where do you get the money to run the government services that both the feds and the state expect you to provide? Conservative Republicans in the most populated areas of the state, especially in the eastern "Golden Triangle" sector of Green Bay, Madison, and Milwaukee, talk of privatizing services in order to break the power of public-sector unions that back the Democrats. (This is what Milwaukee county executive and future GOP candidate for governor Scott Walker is doing. Most government employees in Wisconsin, no matter how big the munic-

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ipality, are unionized.) But such solutions do not sell in the state's more rural western and central parts, including Durand. Because of the loss of farms and factory jobs, government is often the largest employer in these communities, and public-sector jobs are the only decent middle-class jobs available.

These realities have had a profound effect on the state's political scene since former Gov. Tommy Thompson left to serve in President Bush's Cabinet after nearly 16 years in office. Thompson was a social conservative, but he was also a Main Street rural Republican. He cut taxes to help his business allies, but he also used state monies to buy political support, increasing state aid to local governments and devising a plan to have the state pay for one third of all building costs for schools. This set off an explosion of school construction and renovation across the state in the 1990's that kept local economies humming (very Keynesian). He also replaced the state's once-generous welfare system with workfare, which gave him a reputation for being a reform-

er and made him part of a class of Republican governors elected in the late 1980's and early 90's that tried to create a conservative approach to governing. That ultimately led to Republican control and dominance at the state and local level for a decade and a half and even to George W. Bush's election in 2000.

Then came the recession of 2000-02. Suddenly there was no more money coming in, and problems began to arise that left Thompson's hapless lieutenant governor, Scott McCallum, holding the bag. He decided to close the deficit by cutting off state aid to local government and education and castigating local officials for being big spenders. Since many of these officials were traditional small-town Midwestern Republicans like Thompson, this tore the party apart, leading to McCallum's fall and the ascension of the state's Democrats under current Gov. Jim Doyle.

The divide in Wisconsin's Republican Party, as in many states, is not between moderate and conservative, but between rural and suburban. The

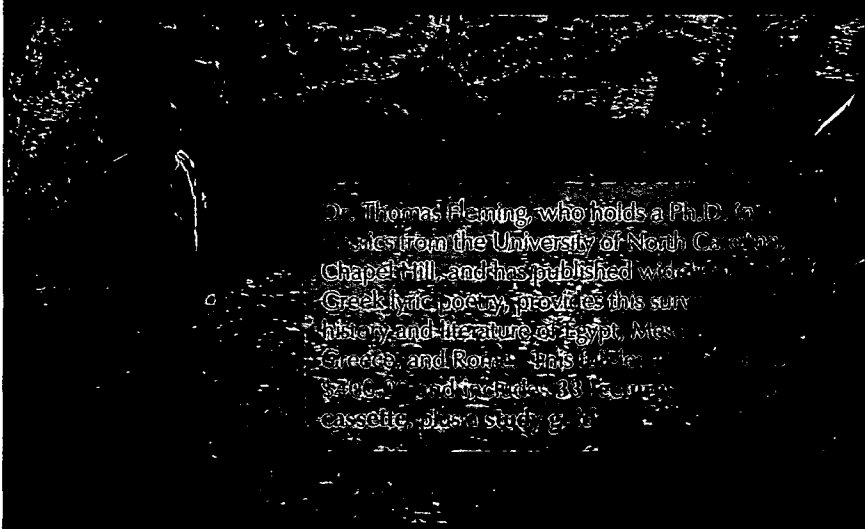
suburban Republican Party is increasingly the stomping ground for DINKs (Double Income, No Kids) who live in the suburbs around Milwaukee, the Fox Valley, and Waukesha County. They have no connections whatsoever to local schools or other community organizations. Their spokesmen are three Milwaukee-based radio talk-show hosts who call down fire from heaven on local governments and school districts every chance they get. Numerous scandals in Milwaukee-area municipalities over the past decade have been fodder for their shows. (Among these was a massive pension scandal involving Milwaukee County employees, which helped Walker get elected as county executive.) But ripping local governments in Milwaukee on the airwaves only makes the party more Milwaukee suburban-centric, which only makes it more unappealing statewide. Thus, a proposal known as TABOR (Tax Payer Bill of Rights), which set strict spending guidelines for local municipalities that receive state funds, failed because the rural Republican Party refused to support it. The idea that politicians in Madison were going to set budget guidelines for communities all across the state was about as far from traditional conservatism as one could get.

Where does this leave conservatives at the local level? Ron Paul said that Republicans at the federal level should do more to control spending rather than worry about tax rates; the opposite is true at the state and local level. If the federal budget were cut and the size of the federal government were reduced, states and localities would have to pick up much of the spending and regulatory slack. But how could they do this if professional conservatives are taking libertarian positions on taxes and privatization that would starve state and local governments and drive middle-class government employees (many of whom are socially conservative) right into the arms of the Democrats?

Sean Scallon is a freelance writer and journalist living in Arkansas, Wisconsin.

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A Sicilian Visit

In Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*, an aging billionaire returns to the provincial town where she was born and announces to the townsfolk that she will leave them all her money, on one condition. They must kill the man, himself now aging, who deceived her years ago. The townsfolk noisily reject the lady's proposition as immoral, but it is clear that their lives will never be the same again.

Alongside utopian nightmares like Zamyatin's or Orwell's, Dürrenmatt's tragicomedy belongs to the genre that authoritarians cannot ignore. When they don't spike it, they turn it round, figuring that so potent a weapon aimed at them will be just as potent when trained on their adversaries. So Orwell, supposedly more frightened of the BBC than he was of the NKVD, has been reclaimed for socialism. So every Russian of my generation remembers the film based on Dürrenmatt's play, set in a provincial German town.

Yet appealing to people's basest instincts may not be as simple a proposition as clever Dürrenmatt supposed. I was recently privileged to observe a sequence of tragicomic events straight out of *The Visit*, and my impression is that it's quite a difficult job.

One summer morning, Palermo's three finest hotels—Palme, where Wagner used to stay; Villa Igiea, on the seafront; and the commodious Excelsior—shut their doors and announced there were no vacancies, something that had not happened here since either the Florio wedding or World War I, depending on whom you talk to in the vegetable market.

The rumor that turned out to be true was that the Sultan of Oman, His Majesty Qaboos bin Said al-Said, was coming to town. "Palermo Ready for Sultan's Visit" was the headline.

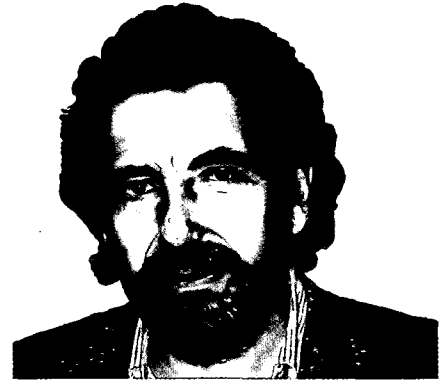
The sultan came with an entourage of a thousand, some of whom would make do with the 190 rooms and suites reserved for them in the hotels, while others, including the sultan

himself and his national symphony orchestra—show me a man who leaves home without an orchestra, and I will show you a Western neurotic weakling—would lodge aboard two yachts docked in the harbor. His Majesty had flown in on his Boeing 747 and was transferred to the royal yacht, which at 155 meters "made the Armani boat," gloated our editorialists, "look like a rubber ducky." No flimflam artist *this sultan of ours*, in other words.

Alongside the royal yacht was moored a "support yacht" of 136 meters. "The Sultan's party," thrilled one newspaper, "have occupied an entire wharf, where two limousines and 24 bullet-proof Mercedes Benz cars are ready to shuttle Qaboos bin Said and his guests wherever they fancy." The hotels had been instructed to remove alcohol from the minibars and to indicate the direction of Mecca on the ceilings. Women were not in the royal party, and our city fathers had been warned against attempts to insinuate them into official functions.

So the wives were as cheesed off as the publicans. Despite this little contretemps, a "prominent astrologer" by the name of Bonomi came forward to "predict a bright future for one of the richest men in the world." The astrologer told the Adnkronos press agency that the sultan "was lucky not simply because he was born into a life of privilege. He would have succeeded even if he had been from a lower class." I wondered if Bonomi ever worked for the CIA. His style of political analysis reminded me of something I'd seen in the Congressional Record.

The symphony orchestra turned out to be a canard, started because the sultan had brought them along on an earlier visit to Bari. Only the military band of the Royal Guard was actually on board, as was revealed later in the day when its 52 members mounted the steps of Teatro Massimo and let fly with *Funiculì, funiculà*. Palermo has no fu-



nicular, but it is just as used to panhandlers, cripples, buskers, and odd street scenes of every kind; so that gesture of good will was received by the local populace with forbearance. But the city fathers were beginning to feel uneasy.

In Bari, "the 68-year-old sultan showed local officials with numerous gold watches." Logically enough, now that he was in Palermo, "local officials and businessman were hoping"—can anybody guess what they were hoping?—"that he would be interested in investing some of his country's wealth in Sicily." And then the news leaked that a paltry hundred-thousand euros had been spent at the local jewellers on watches. Now word went round that the gala dinner aboard the royal yacht—no women, no wine, no pasta—was "egregious crap."

Gifts were distributed. The Bellini Conservatory got a million euros; 2.5 million went to a children's hospital. "Kids? Fiddles?" wondered the city fathers. "Where do the *people* come into this?" As for the sultan himself, nobody ever got to meet him. He never once left his yacht, "comfortably watching videos of local attractions and historic sites," according to news reports. "*Bedda matri!*" one city father was overheard exclaiming, "If I had that kind of money, at least I'd be watching porn!"

If you are out to corrupt the corrupt, a bribe here and a fiddle there just won't cut the mustard. The Dürrenmatt scam looks good on paper, but I bet you that billionaire of his had to be really energetic to pull it off. As she probably was. Heck, she was *German*. ◊

Unstable Multipolarity

It is professionally vexing and personally alarming for a world-affairs analyst in today's America that neither rationality nor consistency can be taken for granted among the foreign-policy community in Washington, D.C. That much has become obvious from the crisis in relations between the United States and Russia over Georgia.

This crisis heralds a particularly dangerous period in world affairs: the return of asymmetrical multipolarity. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, Washington is facing active resistance from one or more major powers. More important than the anatomy of the South Ossetian crisis today, or the Taiwanese crisis tomorrow, is the reactive power's refusal to accept the validity of Washington's ideological assumptions or the legitimacy of its resulting geopolitical claims. At the same time, far from critically reconsidering its hegemonic assumptions and claims, the White House seems ready to uphold them at any cost, a major war included.

A new global balance of power is being created as we speak. It is asymmetrical because one player in the system is significantly more powerful than the others, and unstable because the would-be hegemon does not accept the legitimacy of the other players' interests that could act as a limiting restraint on its own actions and aspirations. A war between two or more major powers is more likely in the configuration of asymmetrical multipolarity than in any other model of global balance known to history.

The most stable global system is bipolarity. Based on the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction, it was prevalent from the 1950's until the end of the Cold War. The awareness of both superpowers that each would inflict severe and unavoidable damage on the other or on their allies in a nuclear war was combined with the acceptance that each had a sphere of dom-

inance or vital interest that should not be infringed upon and with the assumption that both sides were rational players. The result was a tendency to de-escalate conflicts (Cuba 1963) or to exercise restraint even before de-escalation becomes necessary (Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968). Stalin "intended to turn the countries conquered by Soviet armies into buffer zones to protect Russia," said Henry Kissinger. The Western equivalent, also essentially defensive, was defined by the Truman Doctrine (1947) and NATO (1949). Proxy wars were fought in the gray zone all over the Third World, most notably in the Middle East, but they were kept localized even when a superpower was directly involved (Vietnam, Afghanistan).

The bipolar model was the product of post-World War II circumstances that were unprecedented. Those circumstances are unlikely to be repeated in the foreseeable future.

The most stable model of international relations that is both historically recurrent and structurally repeatable is the balance-of-power system in which no single great power is either physically able or politically willing to seek hegemony. This model was prevalent from the Peace of Westphalia (1648) until Napoleon's consulship; from Waterloo until around 1900; and from Versailles until 1933. It demands a relative equilibrium among the key powers (usually five to seven) who hold one another in check and function within a recognized set of rules that has come to be known as "international law." Wars between great powers do occur, but they are limited in scope and intensity because the warring parties tacitly accept the fundamental legitimacy and continued existence of their opponent (or opponents). Bismarck was aware of the temptation of hegemony, able to pursue it, but determined to resist it.

If one of the powers becomes mark-



edly stronger than the others, and if its decisionmaking elite internalizes an ideology that demands or at least justifies hegemony, the inherently unstable system of asymmetrical multipolarity will develop. In all three such instances known to history—Napoleonic France after 1799, the *Kaiserreich* from around 1900, and the Third Reich after 1933—the challenge could not be resolved without a major war.

The government of the United States is now acting in a manner structurally reminiscent of those three powers. Having proclaimed itself the leader of an imaginary "international community," it goes further than any previous would-be hegemon in treating the entire world as the American sphere of interest. Forty years after the Red Army marched into Prague in the name of Brezhnev's doctrine of the limited sovereignty of socialist countries, we have the Bush Doctrine, which may be seen as a mature elaboration of the Soviet legacy.

The formal codification came in the National Security Strategy, unveiled in September 2002, which presented the specter of open-ended political, military, and economic domination of the world by the United States acting unilaterally. The strategy defined two main categories of enemies: "rogue states" and "potentially hostile powers." Both warranted preemptive strikes "by direct and continuous action using all the elements of national and international power. . . . We will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting pre-emptively." The United States would not only confront "evil

and lawless regimes” but put an end to “destructive national rivalries.” To that end, the administration pledged “to keep military strength beyond challenge, thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace.” The normal constraints of world politics would no longer inhibit the exercise of American might.

This doctrine still stands as the ideological basis for the policy of permanent global interventionism. President Bush has added divine sanction to it: “History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight,” he announced in his 2002 State of the Union Address. “We’ve come to know truths that we will never question: Evil is real, and it must be opposed.”

Any attempt by a single power to keep its military strength beyond challenge is inherently destabilizing, and results—sooner or later—in the emergence of an effective countercoalition. Napoleon finally faced one at the Völkerschlacht at Leipzig in 1813. “There is no balance of power in Europe but me and my twenty-four army corps,” the kaiser famously boasted in 1901. Within years he was also building a high-seas fleet, setting off alarm bells in London. By 1907, Wilhelmine Germany engendered a countercoalition that prompted even traditional rivals such as Britain and Russia to join forces (the latter to be replaced by the United States in 1917). And as for the most recent *Griffnach der Weltmacht*, by the second week of December 1941 Germany was doomed to another defeat.

An early symptom of destabilizing asymmetry in action is the would-be hegemon’s tendency to claim an ever-widening sphere of influence or interference at the expense of his rivals. In the run-up to 1914, this was heralded by the Kruger Telegram (1896) and exemplified by the German bid to build the railway from Berlin to Baghdad (1903) and by the First Moroccan Crisis (1905). Neither Napoleon nor Hitler knew any “natural” limits, but their

ambition was essentially confined to Europe. With the United States today, the novelty is that this ambition is extended—literally—to the whole world. Not only the Western Hemisphere, not just “Old Europe,” Japan, or Israel, but Taiwan, Korea, and such unlikely places as Armenia, Bosnia, Estonia, Georgia, Kosovo . . . all the way to Zimbabwe are considered vitally important. The globe itself is now effectively claimed as America’s sphere of influence—Russia’s Caucasian, European, and Central Asian backyards and China’s northeastern and southwestern neighborhoods most emphatically included.

On August 7, 2008, the game itself became alarmingly asymmetrical. For America it is still ideological, but for Russia it has become existential. Russia is now acting as a conservative, pre-1914 European power in seeking to protect her limited, easily definable vital interests. America is acting like a global revolutionary power. It is therefore futile for Russia to try to “manage” the crisis in a pre-1914 manner and hope for some elusive softening on the other side, because the calculus in Washington is not rational. The counterstrategy of unpredictability, exemplified by Medvedev’s recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, is a rational response under the circumstances. It may yet force the remnant of sanity inside the Beltway—and especially at the Pentagon—to exercise some adult supervision over the “foreign-policy community” gone berserk.

Regardless of who is inaugurated come January, there will likely be

no true debate in Washington on the ends and uses of American power. The ideologues’ resistance to any external checks and balances on the exercise of that power will be upheld under either of the two candidates. The teams comprising Anthony Lake, Robert Kagan, Dennis Ross, Bill Kristol, Joe Biden, Randy Scheunemann, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Max Boot may differ in some shades of rhetoric, but they are one regime, identical in substance and consequence.

The ideologues will dispute the validity of the emerging balance-of-power system because they reject the legitimacy of any power in the world other than that of the United States, controlled and exercised by themselves. They will scoff at the warning of 1815, 1918, or 1945 as inapplicable in the post-history that they seek to construct.

They will confront the argument that no vital American interest worthy of risking a major war is involved in Russia’s or China’s near-abroad with the claim that the whole world is America’s near-abroad.

Their ambition, unlimited in principle, will remain unaffected by the ongoing financial crisis—just as Moscow’s Cold War expansionism was enhanced, rather than curtailed, by the evident shortcomings of the Soviet centrally planned economy.

Come what may, they will not allow the reality of global politics to interfere with their world outlook, which is interchangeably “neoliberal” or “neo-conservative,” but hegemonic and irrational at all times. ◇

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COMMONWEAL

The West's Guilty Feelings

by Claude Polin

The decline of the West may sound like a well-worn cliché, but this shouldn't blind us to the fact that there might be some truth to it. The modern West has emerged from a rebellion against the old one, which was at least in part a parricide. Today there seem to be signs of an uneasiness, which may be regarded as the beginning of self-doubt.

The wisdom of ancient times, be it pagan or Christian, held that the whole universe was somehow like an immense organism, so well composed and harmonious that every part of it had its place and played a role in the life of the whole, even if neither the place nor the role was visible to the human eye. The most heinous crime one could commit in this universe would be to disturb the natural harmony of any one part with all the others. Even inanimate things could affect this harmony, and animals still more. It was the sad privilege of man, however, to act as if he were willing to upset it, whether because of his passions, which was the pagan notion, or, more radically, because he was endowed with such freedom that he could go against the general order of things, which was the Christian notion. In both cases the rebellion amounted to one part envisioning itself no longer as a part but as a ruler, freely distributing distinct roles to some, if not all, of the other parts. This was man's prerogative, even though his endeavor was doomed to failure, causing misery to himself first.

But this prerogative is exactly what the inventors of the modern West, at least those dedicated to effacing the old glory of Europe, hailed as the key to human bliss. The modern Westerner (from the 16th century on) was born

as a perfect and solitary whole, as an atom, free to refuse to combine with others except on its own terms, able to adapt to any role anywhere, any time, so perfect and self-contained that it needn't obey any law but its own. This birth was hailed as a rebirth, the coming of the real savior, man himself as a being endowed with Reason, who could bring Paradise to earth. As John Dewey still put it in the 1920's, every man had within himself the potential of a creator. And Europe was at that time granted the unique ability to blaze the trail for the whole of mankind, to be its guiding light out of the Dark Ages into an undefined but essentially shining future. This process was called Progress, for which there was to be no physiological nor spiritual limit, no natural limit but the sky.

One cannot question the fierce pride possessed by the initiators of this *novus ordo seculorum*. Some of them embarked on the project wholeheartedly: There was to be a new man, who, in the words of the emblematic Descartes, would in the near future become "immortal" (the former word for gods, the nonmortals). Some of them may not have been so ambitious: Pride is hardly a virtue in the Calvinistic mentality of the first Americans, who certainly did not dream of creating a new man. But though the reasoning may have been different, the result was the same: They all agreed man had to get out of a corrupt world and forge a new one that would be the opposite of the old one. Governor Winthrop reminded his troops that they were a city upon a hill. More realistic than their utopian European counterparts they surely were, but hopeful and sure of their task all the same. Mankind had its eyes upon them, the same Winthrop admonished them.

Two centuries have elapsed, and the hopes have wilted: The new gods have not done so well after all—or rather, they don't seem to be so satisfied with themselves. Not that they haven't worked wonders in some respects: Man can walk on the moon; man can

replace a human heart as if it were a mere piston in a combustion engine; man has eradicated perennial diseases that used to wipe out millions. At the same time, a significant proportion of our contemporaries seem to have taken to feeling guilty on an inexhaustible number of totally heterogeneous accounts. According to fashionable, widespread criticism, Western civilization is currently guilty of combating abortion, persecuting drug addicts, despising homosexuals, opposing radical freedom, debasing women, promoting chauvinism and racism, endorsing slavery, exterminating American Indians, warring and looting peaceful populations such as Muslims, turning away hapless immigrants, colonizing the world, burning human values, ravaging nature, scorning all beliefs but Christianity, rejecting foreigners, exploiting not only their own poor but their fellowmen, and, generally speaking, ignoring the dignity of other cultures. In a nutshell, the West seems to have dedicated itself to becoming the scourge of mankind.

The passion for feeling guilty knows no limits: France has offered an apology for the Crusades, a "crime" committed by people modern France couldn't imagine having had anything to do with, people whom modern Frenchmen beheaded enthusiastically by the thousands two centuries ago. Apologizing is a fashion on the rise, and the politicians, clerics, and movie and sports stars never miss an opportunity to beat their chests: In a recent issue of the magazine offered to the passengers of the French rail system, the wealthy movie star sister-in-law of the current French president thoughtfully declared, "It is good to feel guilty." What has happened to the self-assurance that prevailed just a few centuries ago when our world was born anew and felt illuminated by human reason?

There are several ways to dismiss the question—each a denial that the common Westerner actually feels such guilt.

A rather cynical, and not very flatter-

ing, opinion would have it that some kind of cowardice is at the root of what is misinterpreted as guilt. A recent scandal in France revealed that big-business magnates were subsidizing the unions that were supposed to be fighting to defend the workers, which was a rather effective way for the former to blunt the edge of the latter's knife. Yielding to blackmail in order to pay for one's peaceful enjoyment of privileges amounts to acknowledging a weakness, and not an honorable one. This might be interpreted as a sign of some sort of guilty conscience, were it not a trade-off: It remains to be proved that the magnates do not feel clever rather than guilty about yielding to union leaders who themselves may very well not be really fighting for justice but merely trying to justify their privileges and to retain their ability to cause trouble. Many wealthy professional guilt-bearers make an obvious show of wringing their hands in order to be left in peace to enjoy their popularity and high life.

Navigating on the same tack, our mercantile elite is prepared to do anything to please the customer, and this includes kowtowing to noninnocent wrath. France's political class is almost of one mind to plead guilty when accused by irate Algerian officials, heirs of their Moscow-protected ancestors, of enslaving, looting, and debasing a country that owes to the French colonists its infrastructure: hospitals, roads, agriculture, and whatever prosperity it ever had or still retains. But France has too many Algerians living within her borders, and too much need of Algeria's natural gas, not to agree to be accused of the most ludicrous crimes for the sake of peace in her working-class suburbs and heat in her homes. And the same can be said of merchants anxious to market their goods. Trading, said Jefferson, enslaves the producer to his client, and the typical innkeeper will always be eager to behave obsequiously, pleading guilty when the guest is not satisfied with the towels.

Even more iniquitous is the battle cry of the promoters of guilt: The duty of the West is to feed the hungry of the world, said Dr. Dominique

Strauss-Kahn—who happens to be director of the International Monetary Fund—echoing the conclusion of the latest session of the Trilateral Commission in Washington. And as Jacques Diouf, director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization, bluntly put it, “the rich countries are responsible for the food crisis throughout the world.” The conclusion drawn by Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank: The West, specifically the United States, must massively increase its financial aid to the Third World. The rope is not a thin one: The banks invest in multinational corporations, which themselves have a direct interest in extending their markets, which means there must be some purchasing power in the poor countries, so it eventually becomes the duty of Western governments to lend their taxpayers' money to those people who have none. The good taxpayer is then obliged to feel guilty about not contributing; hence the necessity of weakening his power of resistance by, say, a policy of massive immigration, which again benefits whoever is seeking cheap labor. And of course the professional socialist will be all too willing to join the band of professional wailers and hailers of guilt.

There is yet another way to dismiss the average feeling of guilt that should not be underestimated. According to the famous Sun-Tzu, there are two ways to overcome an enemy. The elementary one—the Clausewitz way—consists in applying force until one of the adversaries yields. The other is to weaken the enemy from within, to deprive him of his will to defend himself. Then war can be waged without bloodshed, and this is the war waged by all revolutions, the war of the Enlightenment against the Ancien Régime, or the war waged by socialism against the ruling bourgeois class, or, last but not least, the war waged against their counterparts by some Western countries, claiming their perennial crucifixion by the former. The socialists' battles have been primarily psychological ones. Nietzsche may actually have been quite right: Socialism, and related attitudes of ostenta-

tious wailing, may be but the mental or spiritual trick the weak use to overcome the strong, pretending they are not weak but just unwilling to use their strength, so as to make the strong ashamed of theirs. But of course it remains to be seen whether the bourgeois class is composed of strong men, just as it remains to be seen whether the proletarian masses may be considered as possessing such strength of their own. (Lenin doubted it, saying that class consciousness had to be “imported from the outside” into a proletariat that, left to itself, would resort to reforming and bargaining.)

All that being said, there is no smoke without fire: The guilt of the West is not, I think, the artificial product of some clever maneuvering but rather like an inner disease that the West nurtures. There is no fire where there is no ignitable material.

Ask the common Westerner whether he feels guilty about an earthquake or tsunami in a Muslim country, and he will probably reply that he doesn't feel responsible for it. But if you ask him whether he wants to contribute to a relief fund for the wretched victims, chances are he will give quite a few bucks that will add up to an amount disproportionate to whatever help is sent by other Muslim countries, even though some are richer than any Western nations. Whatever catastrophe occurs—flood or drought, for instance—the West seems to see it as its duty to help the victims, even if the same victims have previously spit in its face. Why is that? Is love for mankind suddenly overwhelming people whose Christian faith is getting weaker by the year and who even, like the French, are mostly prone to contempt, if not plain hostility, toward religion? Or is it a vague feeling that the West owes a debt to the rest of the world? Yes, I believe, some kind of guilt is actually at work, and I can sum up my hypothesis by saying that the modern Western house is built upon a lie, but a lie to which the average citizen is more or less a willing accomplice, because he has a definite stake in lying. Hence his guilt. In fact, the two closely related basic dogmas of the modern West-

ern creed, democracy and progress, are each the offspring of a lie.

Democracy is the very source of all the glory and pride the West feels about itself, as well as, in its own eyes, the very title it enjoys to be the light of the world, shining upon the world's future. It is the very destiny of the West, its revealed goal, the end toward which it has more or less unconsciously striven for centuries, the fulfillment of what Christianity has always and vainly tried to turn into reality. Democracy is indeed based on the creed that all men have the same rights, and it was actually born the day those rights were declared. Having the same rights, men were henceforth to be equals, just as the Christian Faith proclaimed them to be. Being equals, no man could any longer be thought to be bound naturally to obey any other man, and therefore all were suddenly not only deemed but actually made free, endowed with that freedom which God was supposed to have given them, and free in particular to build a society in which they would have to obey no laws but their own. And consequently, and even more decisively considering their mutual relationships, they were supposed to be like brothers, which is what Christ Himself wanted them to be, none possessing any right over another, or any thing beyond his neighbor's right to it. Man's dignity was restored at last; peace between men was implemented; happiness for all was at hand.

Now I think it possible to take a view of this that is the opposite of its ritual eulogy. It may be seen as the outcome of two convictions. The first and primary conviction, which has been smothering the classical spirit of the West, is that at the rock bottom of all human things there is nothing but the individual man's radical liberty, his absolute intellectual, moral, and spiritual sovereignty, the belief that a man is essentially (meaning exclusively) a creature of his own making, the son of no one but himself. Even to suppose he has a nature is to sow the seed of his future enslavement. That such ideas are the true basis of the belief in the exclusive validity of the legitimacy of the democratic regime becomes obvi-

ous if we regard democracy as an unwillingness of every citizen to let any other one (such as a king or nobleman) wield any power over himself to which he has not consented. What could such reluctance stem from if not from a basic distrust of all men with regard to all their fellowmen, and what does this basic distrust come from if not from the belief that each individual is the only one who knows what is best for himself, and again what can this belief stem from if not from a belief in the individual's radical individuality, or inescapable sovereignty?

But if this much is true, democracy is a big lie. The democratic creed is not expressive of anyone's respect for the next man's dignity, but only of one's own; nor expressive of any devotion to equality, but only to preventing any other man's will from prevailing over mine; and of course not expressive of any fraternity between men, but only a pretense of it, inasmuch as it is useful to take advantage of one's neighbor without provoking his retaliatory hostility. We often hear that each man has a duty to respect the rights of others. This is ludicrous. Of course man is not always a stupid animal, and many are ready to acknowledge the next man's right—but strictly under the condition that he respect theirs: The right pre-empt the duty and cannot give birth to any duty, properly speaking. Man defined as a creature of rights is a self-loving creature whose liberty knows no limits but those he agrees to set up for his own convenience. In other words, democracy does not express trust in one's fellowman, but distrust. It is the only system in which potential power is supposed to be distributed evenly—not out of respect for the other, but in order for each to be enabled to check on his fellow citizens, defend his own rights, and obey only those rules that are deemed by all of them to be in the interest of all. There is no virtue in a democracy, a system entirely devised to make its citizens realize that it is in their interest to appear virtuous. This means the noble and high-minded talk about the supreme value of collective wisdom, the moral imperative to respect the dignity of man and so

forth, is but callous nonsense devised to conceal a much less flattering reality. In a nutshell, democracy thus understood is not based on any altruism but on sheer egocentrism (something Tocqueville never understood).

The rest then follows: In a democracy any power that is supposedly entrusted to a citizen by his fellow citizens can be suspected of being deviously used to promote the trustee's interest, and regarded as wrongfully wielded. How therefore can any citizen plead not guilty, whatever he does, since sheer common sense holds that no one would have entered the game were it not because he found it profitable? And this reasoning is equally valid whether applied to citizens or to nations. Thus, we may ask, why would a democracy be particularly eager to spread democracy, why would it welcome anyone willing to join the club, unless it has a hidden stake in the act? The West is guilty *en bloc*, because on an individual as well as a collective level, there is nothing a citizen of the West does that he cannot be accused of doing exclusively for his own benefit. Specifically, whatever help is given may be suspected of being given out of a wish to buy peace or a hope for profit.

Hence eventually the reason for the guilty countenance, the overplayed compassion for the suffering ones, so often displayed in our societies by our fellow citizens and particularly by those who are supposed to govern them. For they know they are lying. If I am right, no one actually feels guilty, nor in a way actually is guilty of anything: Personal benefit is the rule of the game. Jean-Jacques Rousseau said this clearly in his *Social Contract*: "*Nul n'entre en société que pour son avantage*" (No one enters society but for his advantage). But this is precisely what no one can openly confess. Whoever should do so would threaten the very fabric of the society everyone has a stake in and wishes to benefit from. There is a contradiction nibbling away at the innards of our societies: The citizens have to pretend to be social beings and behave accordingly toward one another, but only because, were they to confess they actually were not

social beings, they would put a stop to a situation they know is actually or potentially beneficial to them. The society is a fake, a disguise for a perpetuated state of nature, but no one can say this openly: One can only act guilty whenever it becomes too obvious, as if one were a good citizen and fellow citizen who had merely strayed from the right path.

The same basic principle also explains the fact that, even though our societies are devoted to their own enrichment and are very proud of their achievements, they seldom miss an opportunity to behave as if there were something criminal about their own wealth.

When the individual is given the leeway to consider himself entitled to be his own sovereign, both spiritually and politically, nothing can come more naturally to him than a complacency for his own desires—*i.e.*, first for his own pleasures, which is wrongly dubbed epicureanism but should actually be identified as hedonism. For Epicurus taught that men who sought after pleasure should learn to enjoy the simplest ones, which amounted to a particular trend of asceticism, whereas the man who thinks of himself as his own master must be governed by his pleasure alone, since he no longer has any reason, except his displeasure, not to yield to the call of whatever he thinks represents a promise of pleasure. The more absolute his freedom, the more the good is bound to be reduced for him to the pleasurable, the enjoyable. This means that the more sovereignty he can attribute to himself, the more subjective and self-centered his universe is bound to be. An absolutely free individual is a self-contained world in which there is no god but himself. Eventually such a man will be unable to share anything with his fellowman, even an idea—because it is merely the offspring of his own mind, or a feeling, and he is the only one who knows exactly how he feels. At the same time, the more he behaves that way, the more he finds himself unable to live by himself, the thirstier he becomes for pleasures, and the more he is unable to rely exclusively on himself to quench his thirst. Robinson

Crusoe knew he could not afford any old pleasure that appealed to his imagination. Everyone needs help. Unfortunately, under the circumstances, no one cares about anyone else.

Our societies became wealthy when every citizen started devoting his time to making riches. But there is more to this than meets the eye, for it is usually forgotten that one cannot aim to enjoy life's pleasures and spend one's time ensuring the next man's pleasures: This is what Auguste Comte dreamed of, but it goes against the grain of nature. No one can enjoy wine and be satisfied with another one drinking it; no one is moved to give away his wine out of sheer love for wine. He may offer it because he likes his guests, but this has nothing to do with the enjoyment of wine properly speaking. Now since everyone wants wealth, but for himself, and is unable to achieve it exclusively on his own (no one imagines Robinson Crusoe becoming John D. Rockefeller), everyone becomes spontaneously prone to do what seems most natural under the circumstances, which is to offer what he may have of interest to someone else in exchange for what the other possesses that he does not have himself. An industrial society can only be a commercial one, something traditional socialists have never understood and will never accept (but which guarantees the failure of any socialist system). Of course one will reply that this is by no means the invention of modern Western societies: Men have bartered for as long as there have been men. But I am not referring to this type of occasional social relationship, and still less to the mutual help friends and neighbors may occasionally give to one another. I am referring to the systematic extension of barter that is called commerce and to societies in which commerce has become the central and almost exclusive activity. And I am saying that the general spreading of the mercantile attitude gives a very definite twist to such societies. For this means the only time in such a society when Peter, whose nature is to be self-centered and basically indifferent to another's fate, takes an interest in Paul is when Peter happens

to need what Paul happens to possess. Then Peter's natural tendency will be either to take it, when he has the power to do so, or to offer Paul something he needs and doesn't have. In other words, a commercial relation is the only one that is natural between two people who are basically indifferent to each other. And therefore, neither Peter nor Paul will go out of his way to offer more than what he receives, so much so that actually both will try to give as little as possible in order to get as much as possible. Inasmuch as with the passing of time our societies tend to lose the spirit obtaining in premodern centuries—inasmuch as men tend to become free atoms, each going his own way—men become, if not wolves to one another as Hobbes said, at least rats, whose individual interests essentially clash (and all the more so as, in most cases, there exists no personal relationship between the citizens). Of course there is one situation in which such exchanges stand a chance to be fair: when the need and the might are roughly equal on both sides. But it is easy to realize this situation is rare, and all the more so since all partners of a commercial exchange strive to achieve a position of superiority over the others in order to strike the most favorable bargain.

The West has conceived of society as a way out of what was called the state of nature of mankind. It may be wondered whether this distinction is not an entirely moot one, and whether what the philosophers call the state of society is not just a thin veil hastily cast over a reality that is obviously not a pleasant or easy one to live in.

The dream of changing man's nature has been pursued continually in Western societies since the 16th century but has usually ended up in sheer bloodshed, for very logical reasons. So the West has been left for four centuries to devise a way to force the rats to behave as if they were not rats. The only realistic solution that has emerged is to appeal to their enlightened interests, to put every citizen in a position in which it would be in his best interest to behave as if he were virtuous. The fact that the trick often works should

not obliterate the evidence: Rooting virtue in self-interest only means there is no way virtue can be natural to man. Therefore man's natural impulses remain just as powerful when they appear to be tamed as when they were in evidence. The state of society perpetuates the state of nature, but in a hidden way. Why shouldn't it, since it is hailed as natural to man? It is only logical that there should be no more criminals in our society, only people who are sick or have been unjustly dealt a poor hand. There is a basic hypocrisy in our societies: Rules are set to protect the citizens from harming one another, by citizens who know these rules are necessary precisely because it is natural to them not to be what their own rules try to force them to be. To put it otherwise, the citizens set up rules they know they have a natural propensity to evade whenever possible.

Here again is the reason why a vague inner feeling that ranges from embarrassment to guilt is so widespread among Western populations; why the fiercest atheists are so prone to feeling sinful; and why, as soon as the material wealth of Western societies started to stand out from the rest of the world, the whole Western mind became wary and more or less uneasy about its own success and the non-Western world's wretchedness. What happens is not that the average individual actually feels guilty of being so self-centered: If this were the case, then Western civilization would consume itself, and from its ashes a new one would arise, which actually would be the old European one, for man would recover his traditional sense of being a part of the universe. On the contrary, our contemporaries feel very pleased, and proud, about the dignity they have won for themselves, very satisfied with being officially endowed with a natural right to be what they are or wish to be. Unfortunately, since man has painfully discovered that greed forces him to live like a rat, the average individual has also discovered the need to regulate his commerce with his fellowman. But these rules are to him a mere constraint. They are just a means for him to be

left to his own devices. They are made for his convenience. This means he resents them: The obligation to obey them is purely conditional, never absolute. In a word, society is a *burden* to him, but a useful one. And so the average citizen will follow the rules, but only so long as he risks being caught ignoring them: He is spontaneously Machiavellian (admittedly on a rather petty scale). But unless he wants to explode his society, the average citizen has to pretend he is a good citizen, devoted to the commonweal; he has to claim his own particular interest actually is everyone's. This is what all politicians, all political parties, all unions do: boast about being good citizens fighting for justice and fairness. But each of them actually knows he is pursuing his own particular good. That the strikers may be right, that the wealthy businessman claims he has worked hard for his wealth is entirely beside the point: Everyone knows in his heart that the modern house was not built upon fairness but upon the right of each man to pursue his own happiness. The only way out of the snare would be to acknowledge the truth, which is that our societies do not breed true peace and authentic sociability, and bluntly accept as natural the victory of the stronger over the weaker. In the jungle, no animal feels guilty for killing another.

But that is precisely the rub: Nobody can confess that this is the truth of the matter. One cannot enter society because it is a good deal, as Rousseau said, and at the same time claim it is because he worships society for the sake of society; yet this is precisely what one must do unless he wants to destroy all society. One cannot at the same time claim to love one's fellowmen and take advantage of them; this is what the average citizen does, however, and he is not particularly eager to confess. No one can proudly play Machiavelli, because it is precisely under the cover of Paul's right to do whatever he pleases that Peter is justified in freely doing what he does; but this is the role that everyone plays spontaneously. The rights of man, which are supposed to pro-

tect all men from all men, cannot be but the right of all men to do as they please, including using their fellowmen as mere tools, but to confess this would be to entitle others to do the same, which would be to ruin the society everyone has a stake in. The result is that, even though the feeling of guilt may be paltry, everyone has something to hide and therefore cannot help acting guilty. In our societies everyone lies to everyone else, and everyone knows it, but the rule of the game is that no one can even think of exposing the lie. And the ultimate result is endless wailing on the part of the worse off and, among the better off and the very wealthy, mandatory advertised compassion and willingness to pay cash to be left to one's own little business. This is Marxism in a nutshell—except that Marx did not understand that this behavior is not restricted to capitalists but is natural to and typical of modern man as such.

Our societies have not yet completely forgotten or discarded the habits, the moral and religious beliefs, and the mentality they inherited from their own past. So it could be claimed that there is ample matter for the representatives of Western modernity to feel guilty about, provided one looks at things from a traditional Christian point of view: the *libido sciendi*; the *libido sentiendi*; and the *libido dominandi*.

I will not dwell on the *libido sciendi* (though it is obvious the modern Western scientist is trying to play God to himself and one day or another will really regret it), because if there is one thing the average scientist is not about to repent of at the moment, it is his own technological feats. What the average Westerner seems to suffer from, unless he happens to be a brute (which is often the case), corresponds to what classical philosophers identified as the *libido sentiendi* and the *libido dominandi*, the desire for sensual fulfillment and the desire for domineering, for the domination not only of nature but of his fellowmen.

This being said, the very peculiar reason why the West feels inclined to repent so noisily out of a guilt all Westerners are supposed to entertain, and many

may actually feel, has absolutely nothing to do with that to which the Christian Faith used to call people to feel.

The Christian is supposed to understand that he is not what he should be, and he knows what he should be, which is not to behave like an animal possessed by an obsessive concern for his well-being and material comfort. In modern societies, on the other hand, whoever professes guilt does not really feel guilty of being the obsessive consumer he is—or he would not keep being what he is, amassing riches and goods, considering modern Western societies as the pathfinders of human paradise on earth, and claiming the main business of mankind is economic development. He only feels guilty of being exposed as a man who is perfectly happy with what he is, a self-centered animal. He does not feel guilty of what he is, but of being caught not being what he claims to be. So his professed guilt suddenly appears as a kind of tax he has to pay to keep being what he is. He does not send money all over the world because he has sud-

denly converted to Christian charity; he does it because he knows it is the only way he can pretend his sole and exclusive business is not himself, and to earn more money.

Hence the common Westerner's deep attraction to the socialist indictment, which yields the paradoxical advantage of alleviating his guilty feelings without threatening his commitment to the way of life, the type of society, and the values he loves. A socialist is a modern who can afford to criticize modernity superficially without forfeiting his love for it. Socialism consists in acclaiming materialism, provided it be shared universally (especially if the sharing is that of his neighbor's riches), whereas the liberal is unable to shake off the burden of the inner contradiction between his professed concern for universal welfare and his inner exclusive egoism.

The attraction for socialism is so strong, and so natural, that Christians often fall prey to it. Instead of preaching moderation in the love of material goods, and concern for intellec-

tual, moral, and spiritual truth, even the highest authorities of the Christian Faith preach the manufacturing and sharing of wealth (so that all men "could have more in order to be more," as Pope Paul VI put it in *Populorum progressio*). Instead of preaching charity, which is the love of man for the sake of something that transcends men and confers upon them their utmost dignity, they preach solidarity.

It is a rather striking fact that the use of drugs is spreading alongside the consumerist frenzy. Drug addiction may be viewed as the *nec plus ultra* of hedonistic consumption, but one can wonder whether it might not just as well be considered the self-inflicted punishment of Western man for a crime he is not even able to formulate as such, the expression of a guilt he can no longer bear because he cannot hope to alleviate it without changing his way of life, something he cannot even consider doing.

Claude Polin is a professor at the University of Paris-Sorbonne.

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by Thomas Fleming

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Those Dying Generations

Elegy, Spanish director Isabel Coixet's adaptation of Philip Roth's *The Dying Animal* (2001), includes a scene in which 65-year-old Ben Kingsley runs his finger down 34-year-old Penélope Cruz's breastbone as he admires her fully exposed charms on either side. "I worship them," he murmurs reverentially. It would be ungentlemanly to question whether or not Miss Cruz sports worshipful breasts, but I found it a little ridiculous to watch codger Kingsley adore them so solemnly, especially with Miss Cruz gazing down on his bald pate as if she were Aphrodite accepting her divine due from yet another besotted earthling.

Elegy fails because Coixet and screenwriter Nicholas Meyer lack any sense of irony. They have taken Roth's sulfuric novella of sexual delusion and turned it into a ludicrous May-December romance minus the laughs. This is a three-hanky woman's movie with more nudity than customarily allowed.

The narrative concerns the love affair between Consuela, a Cuban graduate student in her mid-20's, and her professor, David Kepesh, who is 62 when the relationship begins. After a year and a half of weekly lovemaking, Consuela invites Kepesh to her graduation party to meet her parents. He fears looking foolish in front of her family, so he cancels at the last moment with a transparently phony excuse. His cowardly self-regard effectively ends their relationship. Years later—eight in the novel, something less in the film—Consuela calls, asking him to help her face an ordeal, and the narrative concludes with his response.

The film is an exercise in high-toned sentimentality that leaves in its torpid wake a flotsam of inconvenient questions. For instance, after so long an absence, would Consuela turn to the now 70-year-old Kepesh for help? Her explanation is feeble.

She admits there have been other men in her life, but none of them, she assures him, "loved my body as much as you." What? With those adorable breasts? And what about that matter of age? At 20, a woman might delude herself into believing adoration of her body is the same thing as love, but not after 30. To be fair, Roth's plot includes the same improbability, which, on the page, seems transparently motivated by an aging novelist's vanity. Kepesh is a recurring character in Roth's work. Most notably, he was the man who morphed *à la* Kafka into a six-foot mammary in *The Breast* (1972). Furthermore, his career parallels that of Roth, who has been a professor at various universities and a culturally and politically engaged essayist. Perhaps Roth was sneakily affirming his own continuing vitality by having Consuela come back to his fictional self-projection.

This is not to deny the novella's power. It is a tonic emetic of all that crap about the Sexual Revolution that even now lingers in America's cultural bowels. As the benighted first-person narrator, Kepesh indicts himself unawares as a loathsome sexual predator licensed by the 60's. Once he realized there had been a subversion of America's sexual mores, he dumped his wife and eight-year-old son and went to town preying on his female students. By way of justification, he claims he afforded these girls the benefit of an interlude with a seasoned, aesthetically cultivated man. Then, after three decades of unfettered hedonism, he makes the mistake of falling for Consuela, a woman whose character has been formed by her Hispanic Catholic culture. She may be foolish enough to allow Kepesh to seduce her, but she is not an American-bred sexual toy. When the time comes to dispose of her, he finds he cannot. In her absence, he feels "deformed" by jeal-



Elegy

Produced by Lakeshore Entertainment
Directed by Isabel Coixet
Screenplay by Nicholas Meyer
from a novel by Philip Roth
Distributed by Samuel Goldwyn Films

Burn After Reading

Produced by Relativity Media
and Studio Canal
Directed and written by
Joel and Ethan Coen
Distributed by Focus Features

ousy, haunted by the prospect of her with a younger man.

Kepesh is a cold-hearted bastard whose whining tale of comeuppance serves as a kamikaze assault on America's headlong hedonism. The usually libertine Roth seems self-disgusted here. He has arranged matters so that his double must confront mortality in a particularly ugly turn of events.

Coixet's film might have been better had she listened to Roth. He had made two requests: Kingsley should wear a wig, and the film should include the scene in which Kepesh licks Consuela's menstrual blood from her legs. Coixet complied with neither. Kingsley didn't want a wig, and, for obvious reasons, Coixet wasn't delighted by the prospect of showing Kepesh pay Consuela such unwholesome attention. She was wrong on both counts.

The novel makes strategic use of Kepesh's coiffure. In a fit of anger, his alienated son derides him as an "old fool" for wearing a "long white page-boy of important hair," comparing him

to the aging Aschenbach in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, who futilely rouges his cheeks to look young and attractive. As for the menstrual blood, it comes about because Consuela tells Kepesh of an episode when she was 16. Her cousin insisted on seeing the results of her period. Kepesh makes the same demand, and when Consuela complies, he attempts to outdo his retroactive competitor by consuming some of her blood. This particularly *outré* fetish seems meant to depict Kepesh as a pathetic vampire trying to sustain his waning vitality with the blood of young women. That the learned Kepesh gives no hint that he recognizes the implications of what he is doing makes him all the more contemptible. More than vampiric, the act celebrates sterility by its attention to another ovum's unfertilized passing. This is Kepesh all over. His life has been one long death wish. He has divorced sex from procreation so completely that his son's progeny disgust him. Abortion is his first and only counsel to those foolish enough to start pregnancies.

So this is what the 60's have begotten. No wonder the novel ends with Kepesh cornered, unable to take another step for fear that he will be "finished." Of course, he is finished already; he is just too self-obsessed to heed the counsel of William Butler Yeats' poem, "Sailing to Byzantium," from which Roth took his title. There we learn that an aging heart, "sick with desire and fastened to a dying animal . . . knows not what it is," unless it allows itself to be gathered into "the artifice of eternity." The ghoulish Kepesh prefers to remain in a sensual realm "that is no country for old men."

* * *

Last year Joel and Ethan Coen adapted Cormac McCarthy's Yeats-inspired *No Country for Old Men*. The resulting film seemed a departure from the brothers' usual fare. Now comes *Burn After Reading* to suggest otherwise. This wildly funny film echoes their earlier work, but thematically it is on the same page as the somber, gnostic *No Country*. Both films focus on dim,

deluded people who believe unreasonably in their own importance until fate abruptly disillusion them. In *No Country* the mysterious Chigurh stalks fools to deliver the message that their little lives are at the mercy of chance. In *Burn*, the CIA and private investigators specializing in divorce cases labor to prove the same thing.

Near the film's end, an ex-CIA officer, Osborne Cox (John Malkovich), corners an intruder in his basement. "You're a member of the league of morons," he screams, pointing a gun at this hapless fellow with one hand while holding a drink in the other. This showdown ushers in the film's uproarious climax. The narrative's two forces set in motion by Osborne and, improbably enough, a gym manager named Linda Litsky (Frances McDormand) finally collide. Both Osborne and Linda are paragons of America's obsession with positive thinking and self-invention and, as such, perfectly incarnate self-importance. They have been trying mightily to transform their identities—Osborne, by literally rewriting his life's narrative; Linda, by means of extensive cosmetic surgery.

The intruder is indeed a moron, but compared with Osborne and Litsky, he's a rank amateur. And, you'll be glad to learn, each of the rest of the cast of characters is a certifiable dunce. For my money, there are few pleasures more satisfying than spending 97 minutes watching this league of morons run their silly paces.

As suits its theme, this coolly misanthropic movie begins with a God's-eye view of earth. Then the camera descends in one continuous zoom toward greater Washington, D.C., and its puny inhabitants, a single building in its target finder. The words "Langley, VA" print across the bottom of the screen, and a moment later we are inside the offices of the CIA watching Osborne being demoted. "This is a crucifixion," he bellows, immediate-

ly plotting revenge. He will write a tell-all memoir about his CIA service. "There's a higher sort of patriotism," he declares. He is undoubtedly correct, but he didn't count on "that Jew woman" Linda who has decided that she has gone "as far as [she] can with [her] body." She is determined to alter her arms, belly, buttocks, and, of course, the "window of the soul" that is her face. Since her HMO refuses to pick up the tab, she must find an alternate source of funding. When, by happenstance, she finds a computer disk containing Osborne's memoir, she has her source. With the help of her gum-chewing colleague Chad (Brad Pitt), she plots blackmail.

Once its motor starts, this film never lets up. It zips through a twisty course filled with devilish switchbacks that threaten to confuse the viewer but never really do, thanks to some supremely attentive writing and superbly engineered editing.

It would be unforgivable to say anything more. The film's joys should be savored, undiluted by critical comment. The performances are uniformly perfect. With her round, blue eyes and unrelenting smile, McDormand makes Linda more maniacally hopeful than Kenneth Grahame's Mr. Toad. Malkovich exhibits titanic *amour propre*, as his character would put it. George Clooney plays a womanizing treasury agent never without the service revolver he's not "discharged in twenty years of duty." Tilda Swinton does her *über*-bitch to a fare-thee-well. Richard Jenkins, so good in *The Visitor*, again proves himself with his understated portrait of a caring, lovelorn loser. And Brad Pitt renders the quintessence of moronhood, a dyed-blond streak in his swept-back hair and an iPod plugged constantly in his ears.

Just one caveat: Don't see this movie if you possess a heart low on the granitic index. ☞

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The Hobbyist



The joyous return to Rancho Juárez was dampened, but in no way spoiled, by a certified letter awaiting Mr. and Mrs. Héctor Villa on their arrival. Mailed from the Belen Municipal Court, it threatened their daughter with juvenile detention if she did not return within ten days' time to complete her court-ordered work with Darfur Relief. Héctor thought later that, had Judge Ulibarri known how much relief of an entirely different sort his letter would produce in the bosoms of the miscreant recipients, he probably wouldn't have written it. Terrorists or no terrorists, the Villas were going home, at last! Héctor could not remember being so happy since he arrived in the U.S.A. twenty years before.

Meanwhile, the family gave thanks to God for the recovery of Contracepción, who seemed none the worse for her experience in Las Vegas save for a bruised artistic ego. Siggy, it had become apparent to her after twenty-four hours, had no musical connections whatsoever in town but plenty of romantic ones, amounting to a kind of harem. When she refused to cooperate with his plans for her on their second night together, he'd become abusive, and Contracepción had run from the apartment and spent the night sleeping in a chair at the bus station downtown. Unshaken in her ambition to support herself in her quest to become the new Britney Spears, she'd applied the next day for a job at the MGM and been referred to the Lion Habitat, where the position of poop-scooper was available after the previous incumbent, while on a methamphetamine high, had let himself into the lions' den while the lions were still in residence there, under the delusion that he was himself a lion. On Contracep's second day on the job, Dubya, during an afternoon visit to the Habitat, had recognized his sister on the other side of the plate-glass window

and so informed the nanny. Héctor, after he'd calmed down, had wanted to call the police on Siggy and was dissuaded only when Contracep told him she'd never learned the guy's last name and that the apartment she'd escaped from was a girlfriend's, not his own pad. It had also occurred to Héctor that the girl should be examined by a gynecologist, but AveMaría refused absolutely to sanction the idea. Their daughter, she declared firmly, needed to know that her parents had implicit trust in her. So Héctor, reluctantly, had backed down. He had enough to ponder as it was, he thought. In spite of his elation at getting Contracep back, he felt a deep sorrow, springing from doubts and disillusion, in his heart. What kind of society (Héctor could not help but ask himself) made possible an ordeal such as the Villa family had suffered the past five days?

When the Juárezes learned of Héctor's decision to take his family back to Belen, Jesús "Eddie" and Beatriz announced their decision to return home, too. "Them goddamn *A-rabs* don't scare *me* none," Jesús "Eddie" had declared, striking what he imagined to be a belligerent pose. "I'm goin to start a Critter Company myself, just as soon as I get home—drive all the f-kin' *ragheads* out of the Río Abajo." (This speech was delivered largely for the benefit of Contracepción, who was within hearing distance at the time. Jesús "Eddie" didn't buy her parents' story that their daughter had escaped her adventure with her virginity intact. He felt certain that, having yielded to Siggy, she was softened up for further advances from anyone lucky enough to have a chance with her.) In fact, the couple left nearly a week earlier than the Villas, who found themselves pinched between the judge's ten-day deadline and the time it took the *migra* to clear the Hipólito Zapatas from their house. (What happened to his relatives after that, Héctor never

learned, nor cared to know.)

When AveMaría walked through the door and saw what condition her house was in, she fell across the stained and torn upholstery of the sitting-room sofa with such deadweight force that her husband thought she had suffered a heart attack. It would take weeks and weeks, she sobbed upon regaining consciousness, to clean up the mess and put things to order again, though she never expected to rid the house of the smell of those *puercos* entirely. Seeking to console and reassure his wife, Héctor promised the family that, until the place had been restored to its original pristine condition, the Villas would eat out downtown every evening, to spare AveMaría the added burden of having to cook. The immediate and unforeseen result of this announcement was a fight between Contracepción, who favored Taco Bell and Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Dubya, who preferred Frankie's Grill & Ice Cream Parlor and McDonald's. Héctor settled the issue for the time being by driving everyone to the Golden Corral on South Main Street, a steak and barbecue house that was far too expensive as a regular thing but made a nice treat on the occasion of the Villas' first night at home. All of them retired early that evening, lying uneasily on stripped beds beneath rough Mexican blankets after AveMaría declared the bed linen was spotted with bedbugs and smelt of burnt lard.

Contracepción returned to work at Darfur Relief the next day, and by week's end Héctor was servicing several of his old accounts. And Ave-

María's cleaning estimate proved to have been overly pessimistic when, with help from Theresa Aguilar as well as, after work hours, Contracepción, the Villa house was rendered livable within a fortnight. Objectively, at least, the family had been restored to normalcy. And yet . . . Héctor could not throw off the feeling that, beneath the surface, everything had changed—perhaps forever.

Somewhat to his surprise, and much to his dismay, a mere ten weeks' absence from Belen entailed a loss to his business that was not to be made up overnight. And so Héctor found himself with a greatly diminished income, but also an unprecedented number of leisure hours on his hands. Some of this time he spent in the company of Jesús "Eddie," hanging out at the new Taberna Aztlán, which had arisen like the phoenix from its ashy plot between Highway 47 and the Rio Grande. But Héctor could not drink all day, even had AveMaría permitted him to do so, while winter temperatures made decorative projects in the yard unpleasant. In search of a new hobby that could be practiced indoors, he scanned the *Valencia County News-Bulletin* for club meetings and other community activities unrelated to the great game of politics. The service clubs, such as the Lions and Rotary, failed to interest him and were in any event involved in games of footsie or actually in bed with certain state and local politicians, including Tomasina Luna.

Apart from Pancho Villa, Héctor had never had much interest in history. One day, several weeks after the Villas' return to Belen, he read a column in the *News-Bulletin* contributed by the Valencia County Historical Society about an incident that had occurred in the mid-1600's along the Camino Real, some miles south of the present-day hamlet of Contreras on the Rio Grande. A party of Apache warriors had attacked a Spanish caravan and made off with the contents of a treasure wagon, which according to legend they had floated across the river and buried high on the slopes of Ladron Peak. Héctor was less in-

terested in the legend than he was to learn that there was such a thing as the Valencia County Historical Society. In his enforced leisure, he had spent many hours already surfing the web for tidbits concerning The Centaur. A Pancho Villa State Park already existed, apparently to answer a dire public need. Why not, Héctor wondered, a Pancho Villa Historical Society, affiliated perhaps—at least in the beginning—with the county one? Villa had been a celebrity of sorts in the El Paso of his day, and there had to be many Villa enthusiasts still in the Rio Abajo, some of them descended, it could well be, from the General's girlfriends in El Norte. And it would be a great feather in his cap, in respect of the Hijos de Pancho Villa, if he could succeed in founding a kind of American chapter in New Mexico. The more Héctor considered this idea, the more certain he became that here was a dream that could not fail. It would be of great help, of course, if he could prove that Pancho Villa had ever visited Valencia County—better yet, that he'd slept there—but Héctor did not consider this to be a problem. Nothing was easier in America, he'd observed, than to launch and keep afloat another compelling urban legend.

In his excitement, Héctor confided his plan to Jesús "Eddie" that evening at the Taberna Aztlán, even though his friend had never evinced any particular interest in The Centaur. To his astonishment, Jesús was enthusiastic—not about the Pancho Villa Historical Society but rather about the treasure story.

"*Compadrito*, this is incredible! I have known of this legend since my Grandfather Luis told me of it when I was a *chico*, this high!" With his hand, Jesús "Eddie" indicated a level about three feet above the bar wood, and one above his head. "I have believed in it ever after, and the fact that you, *amigo*, have read about this in the paper proves to me that it is true after all!"

Héctor was skeptical, but the warmth of Jesús "Eddie's" response was contagious.

"If there really is treasure buried up there on Ladron Peak, why hasn't

it been found in four hundred years?" he wanted to know.

Jesús "Eddie" gave him a pitying look. "Because people haven't looked for it in the right place—that's why."

In the end, Héctor wasn't hard to convince. The romance of a quest for hidden treasure appealed to him at a time in which the romance of so much of his life in America was fading, and he found the prospect of a new dream to replace the one he had lost, or was losing, of comfort. He could not help but be further impressed by Jesús's apparent readiness to drop his plans to found a Rio Abajo Critter Company—the more so as the alien, in particular the Muslim, problem in Belen was very bad and getting worse. Turbans, headscarves, *nigabs*, and burqas were a common sight all over town nowadays. (On the positive side, neither Abdul Kahn nor his accomplice had showed his face since the return from Rancho Juárez.) Perhaps, Héctor concluded, a treasure hunt was just the hobby he'd been looking for as a distraction from his worries and a source of relaxation from work.

"So when do we start?" he asked.

Jesús "Eddie" flung a handful of popcorn at President Bush's image on the widescreen TV. Héctor winced, but did not protest as once he would have done. He was beginning to wonder, very privately, whether Dubya was all FOX News cooked him up to be. The President, on his way back to the White House after facing off with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the issue of the Iraq war, was grinning broadly, his smile wide as the Cheshire Cat's, wide enough—Héctor thought—to swallow the world.

"As soon as we both have another round," Jesús "Eddie" said.

"I'm buying," Héctor told him. He was beginning to feel like a multimillionaire already. ☞

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Mexico Way

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